

TIDAL ECHOES

is an annual showcase of
writers and artists with
one thing in common:
a life surrounded by
the rainforests and
waterways of
Southeast Alaska.

UAS UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA
SOUTHEAST
learn • engage • change

Untitled by David Woodie

TIDAL ECHOES | UAS LITERARY & ARTS JOURNAL 2009

UAS LITERARY & ARTS JOURNAL 2009 TIDAL ECHOES

A publication of the University of Alaska Southeast and Capital City Weekly

COVER TO COME

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Dedicated to “good” pirates everywhere (those who honor the code)

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Davy Josh's Note

First of all, you may have noticed that this journal was dedicated to pirates everywhere. You may be asking yourself, "What kind of game is this? Who dedicates a university publication to pirates?" Well, sir or madam, rest assured we do not condone piracy unless it is of the rum-swilling, swashbuckling, treasure-burying kind. And sometimes the kind involving downloading music. Legally, of course.

Secondly, we'd like to consider all of you who pillage and plunder the pages of this journal to be honorary pirates. Without you, there'd be no *Tidal Echoes*. I'd like to give a big "yo-ho-ho!" and a bottle of rum¹ in thanks to everyone who made it into the journal this year and to ALL who submitted! Submit again next year if you have any work to share, and I'm sure Chalise will be more than willing to offer bottles of rum of her own.

And, of course, thank you to our wonderful faculty advisor Emily Wall who, as always, kicked my behind with her peg-leg and kept me focused and on track. And another big thank you to Virginia Berg who, as always, is an exceptionally reliable and knowledgeable woman, and without her help we may as well have been sailing blind in the Caribbean without a compass.

Thank you as well to the editorial board! They took the time to pore over every submission and decide what would go into the journal. Their help was invaluable in the production of this fine volume you now hold in your hands. We are also in John Pugh's debt, as always, as without his funding and willingness to support *Tidal Echoes*, it would simply not exist as anything more than a pamphlet printed on computer paper, if even that.

There are also two new contributors to the journal this year: first, *Capital City Weekly*, who designed the layout of this journal (don't you love it?), copyedited, and pretty much proved to be awesome. Thank you so very much! Second, I'd also like to thank Kari Dammerman, our fall intern, for basically doing a lot of the dirty work and making this spring semester merely stressful as opposed to last year's "sleepless."

And, finally, thank you to David Woodie and especially Ernestine Hayes, who put up with my interview shenanigans and took time out of her day to let me probe the mind of one of Southeast Alaska's premier writers.

Aye, thank ye to every landlubber who slaved, contributed, read, picked up, and glanced at this year's edition of *Tidal Echoes*!

*As always,
Josh Carter
Senior Editor & Jim-Lad*

¹ Offer expires April 1, 2009

A Note From Chalise

I would like to first and foremost say thank you to this group of people we commonly refer to as Southeast Alaskans. It's a culture entirely its own, despite what each individual's origins may be. You are the people who color the pages of this journal and without your individuality and unique presence this journal would not be so clearly reflective of who we are.

I would also like to thank all of the professors here who continue to encourage, instruct, and lead us on. It is always clear when a teacher is not merely a teacher by choice but more importantly by nature. Your love of what you do is evident in the passion you put forth every day. Without you where would we be?

With that said, I would also like to say a HUGE thank you to Emily Wall. She has been an inspirational teacher, mentor, and nothing short of an anchor for me when I needed it most. I know this has been the case for many other students as well. You are an invaluable asset to this institution and to the students who attend. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of this amazing project.

Also, a thank you to Josh Carter for his knowledge and seemingly relaxed demeanor. I'm glad I've had the opportunity to work with you on this project and appreciate the humor and glorious sarcasm with which you approach it and the rest of life. And, above all else, a fondest tip of me hat in respect for a fellow pirate...ARRRR!

Thank you to the entire Editorial Board for your time and knowledge. And to Virginia Berg. How would anything get done without you there to walk us through? I'm pretty sure you need your very own cape because you are indeed the superhero of the Humanities Department. Thank you to Chancellor John Pugh for another year of support, without which there would be no journal. We hope you are as proud of this year's journal as we are.

A deep-felt thank you to *Capital City Weekly* and specifically Katie Spielberger for partnering with us. Your professional and financial contribution has been a huge support to this journal and we appreciate the knowledge and experience you've brought to this venture.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you to our featured writer Ernestine Hayes and our featured artist David Woodie. We are lucky to have two such amazingly inspired people as part of the faculty here at UAS and we thank you for investing your time in future creative minds. I would also like to say a special thank you to David Woodie for sitting down with me and letting me pick your brain. As always, it was a pleasure chatting with you.

Chalise Fisk

Junior Editor, a.k.a. Josh's Lackey and First Mate

A Note from Emily Wall

Welcome to the 2009 issue of *Tidal Echoes*! We are so pleased to be able to continue the tradition of showcasing the writing and art of those living in Southeast Alaska. This is the 7th year *Tidal Echoes* has been published and we are grateful to the many people who made this journal possible.

First, we thank those who submitted! We received more than 260 submissions this year—our highest number yet. This journal would not exist without your willingness to submit your work. We owe much of the thanks for these submissions to UAS student Kari Dammerman who spent her fall semester throwing out the *Tidal Echoes* net and gathering all your work to us.

Joshua Carter and Chalise Fisk, two UAS students, are this year's editors. This year's journal bears the delightful marks of their hard work, sense of humor, and dedication to this project. This journal would not be possible without the many late nights these two put into this project. As a faculty member it makes me proud to work at a university with such dedicated and talented students.

Many thanks go to Virginia Berg, the Queen of Humanities. Her dedication to the work of the department is an inspiration to us all, and without her advice and direction this journal would not be the fine volume you now hold in your hands.

We especially would like to thank UAS Chancellor John Pugh, for his continued support of this journal. Chancellor Pugh has always demonstrated his enthusiasm and support for the work of UAS students and without his special projects grant, this journal would not be possible.

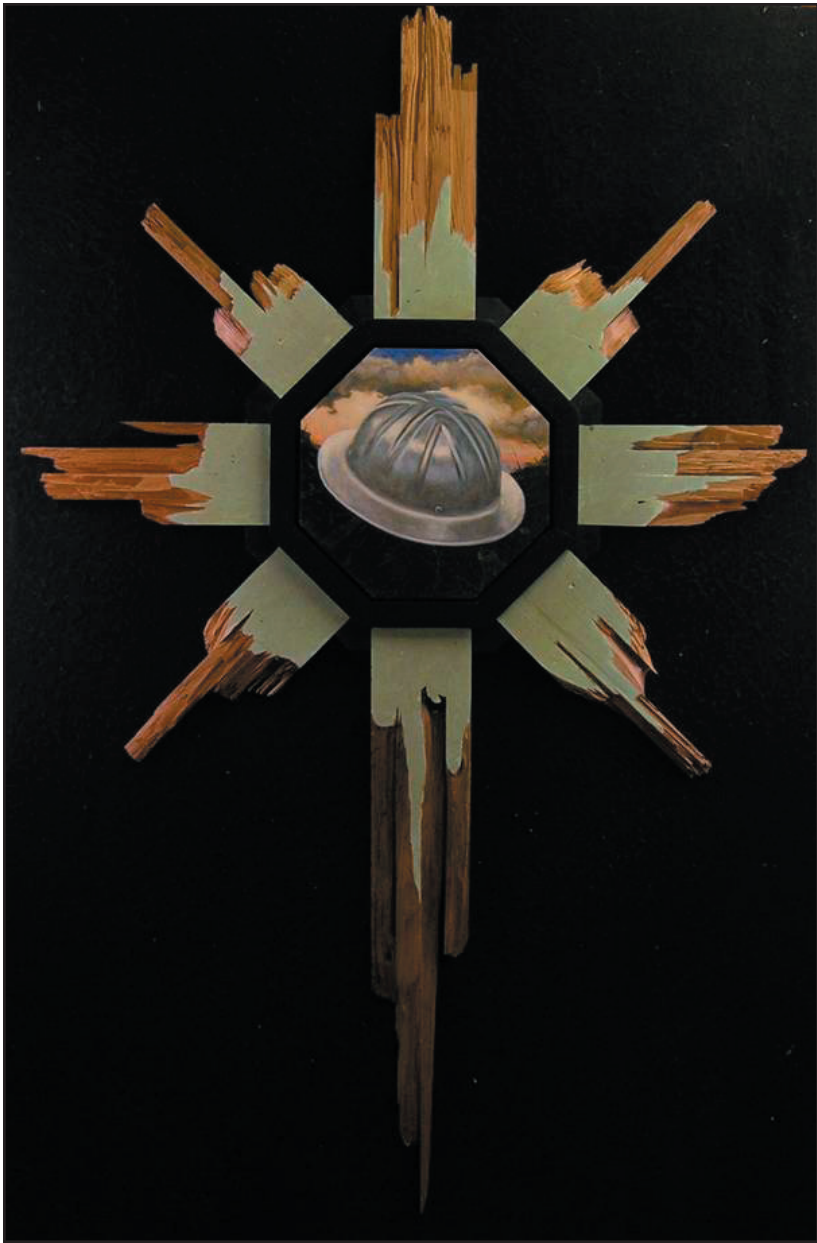
This year we have a new group to thank at *Capital City Weekly*, in particular Katie Spielberger and Charles Westmoreland, who initiated the idea of a partnership with UAS. *Capital City Weekly* has donated many thousands of hours and dollars toward making this project a reality and we are grateful for their support.

I'd like to offer a warm thanks to my colleagues in the English and Art departments who volunteered their time and expertise on the editorial board: Professors Kevin Maier, Susan Koester, Flordelino Lagundino, Jeremy Kane, Sara Minton, and Liz Dodd. In the midst of a busy semester they took time to carefully read many hundreds of pages of work and offer their expert opinions to shape the contents of the journal.

And finally, a special thanks to Ernestine Hayes and David Woodie for agreeing to be the featured writer and artist for this year's publication. We are honored to be part of a project showcasing their beautiful work.

We would like to invite all of you who are living in Southeast Alaska to submit next year. We are grateful for the rich body of work you send us each year and thank you for enriching our lives here in Southeast Alaska.

Emily Wall
Faculty Advisor



Brain Bucket by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on wood panel, approximately 36" x 50"

Cephalic index

I took my baby
to the Public Health Nurse
and the nurse measured her head,
pulling the tape taut around
my baby girl's thick black hair
measuring her cranial capacity,
measuring,
measuring again just to be sure.
They wanted me to come back
but I told them
of course she has a family head,
she is from the Head House
—Kaa Shaayí Hít,
 and she is also a Mork
 She is Norwegian
 She is Táx'—Snail
 She is Yéil—Raven
But they made me
bring her back anyway
and they still kept measuring
telling me they were concerned
about the diagnosis behind
the circumference of her head,
but I told them
no need to be concerned because
I am the mother-expert
who knows
there needs to be room enough
inside her head
for all our histories;
because someday I know she will be the one—
the one who tells our stories,
since we belong
to a people
who are measured
by our words

A Gift of Fat for the Fire

You are an old story born from
the ocean six-hundred-thousand-years ago
when the Old-Woman-Underneath
hungered for grease and rocked you to your birth.

You were pushed out of fissures
and tectonic plates—plates dipping beneath
one another, magma rising to the surface.
This morning, I see you from my window,

clouds spewing like smoke from your
hollowed basin with a passion story you ache
to thrust from remnant molten lava cooling
some 10-miles below.

The colonizers called you Mount San Jacinto,
today you are Mount Edgecumbe;
But I know your story: a woman ashamed
who threw herself into your crater.

I call you by your real name—
L'ux, L'ux, L'ux, L'ux.
Like offerings in the fire,
my words are rich and dripping,

appeasing the earth-rocking-fire-spewing woman
awaiting her gift of fat, a chant
giving you back the motion
of your most recent 4,000 year-old story—

and a prayer to keep my footprints
solid—every day walking
atop this two-feet of ash.

Our heroes have always been...

1.

I turned the radio off when Willie sang about heroes always being cowboys and turned off the TV when I saw the Indian girl on a movie set in Alaska saying something about how every Native American knows how to ride a horse and she rides off with the white hero into the woods.

2.

For me, it was the other way around because I am the girl who rode off with the Indian man into the woods and years later, I still see the picture of my children's father riding on a horse on his first visit off the island, a teenager with his black cowboy hat on smiling like John Wayne on a hero's journey.

3.

And when I raised my son I fell for the hero's journey across our landscape and I put my son in Superman, Spiderman and Karate pajamas and I don't know why? I think because Sherman Alexie was still teething on words and playing with pencils then and Down-South smoke signals didn't find its drift way up here in Alaska.

4.

But somehow John Wayne still wanted to teethe on our souls and his smoke signals drifted through our barriers anyway, because we don't have a reservation border to keep him out like they do in Metlakatla where you have to get permission to live there. So Mr. Wayne took the ferry and rode in on his horse, sneaking around this island and setting up summer Vacation Bible School at the Presbyterian church.

5.

And on his sneaking vacation I saw that he had changed the rules in order to be politically correct calling the theme, Western Days—reminiscing about those days when there was a bounty on our ancestors. They put cowboy hats on our kids, plastered their faces on wanted posters, had a bar-b-que-hoe-down, and sang cowboy songs—King of the Wild Frontier.



Colorful Clouds by Victoria Phillips, UAS Student, Auke Bay
Photography

Our heroes have always been....new stanza

6.

And on the first day of that wild frontier I drove up to the door of the church and saw John Wayne standing on the steps singing the words of a cowboy song and waving a rope about his head. I rolled down my window to listen but I couldn't tell by the words, who the hero was. And I couldn't tell if the rope they were using was for hanging or lassoing. But John Wayne stood there smiling trying to rope our children in. So I opened the door and got out and untied the lasso around my car. And when I drove off, I smiled and waved with my son still in the back seat.

7.

On the way home, we drove down Church Street, smiled and waved at all the other missionaries hanging out on the steps near their open VBS doors. We sang loudly, our own version of Willie's song—about growing up dreaming of warriors, of loving the warrior ways, how to hold onto our myths for thousands of years, how our heroes have always been warriors—they still are it seems—in search of a place to be warriors, stepping forward into our dreams, how our heroes have always been warriors, stepping forward into our dreams.

Role Model

You
unknowable clanned
impossibly figured
 seventeen-inch waist
 no boobs
 no sex
five-inch-long footed
 high-heeled woman
 from the Northwest coast
 with Down-South Native clothes
 and Inupiat mukluks

whose gift box says
you play a traditional Inuit game
and originate from the Totem Pole People
and are able to speak the Lingít language
with your plastic tongue—

My little girl
is combing
her dreams through your hair
and dancing around
our living room
singing the Disney
Pocahontas song.
How am I supposed to tell her
that she will never become
a Tlingit Barbie doll?

Anchors

"Herring," I shout above the din of screaming seagulls, as I lean over the edge of the skiff to peer at silvery flashes of small fish through the milky white water surrounding the kelp bed.

"Spawning," he calls back, and cuts the engine.

Hundreds of excited seagulls dive in the kelp; twenty bald eagles reel in the wind, and a dozen sit in nearby hemlocks. The birds are blaringly loud. My husband, Dennis, drops anchor and lets out twenty feet of chain and enough line for the anchor to hold fast to the sea floor through high tide and wind. Waves push milky foam, the milt from the male herring, around us as we row to shore in our inflatable raft. Above us, bald eagles circle, then dive down to the water's surface, grab ribbons of kelp, and trail them in their talons, like streamers, to the trees where they pick herring roe off the brown ribbons. The ground is littered with discarded bits of kelp. Seagulls sit on floating kelp to eat roe, but make way when an eagle flies close. As we step on shore in front of our cabin, I am a stranger in familiar woods, eyes opened to startling activity in the kelp bed.

It is early May. Last week the water was clear; a month ago there wasn't any kelp - we could see the rocky sea bottom as we anchored our skiff. As the kelp grew and took hold, so did the marine life around it. In the three years we have come to the cabin, we never saw herring before, rarely do we spot seagulls, and although there is always an eagle, there is never a crowd. For three days, the noise of reeling eagles and seagulls is constant, 24 hours a day. Sleep comes hard because of the din. Every kelp bed for miles around hosts a similar scene for a brief period. I've read that demand for herring roe on kelp has created a lucrative commercial fishery just a few hours by boat from here, across Chatham Strait in Hoonah Sound and Tenakee Inlet. There, commercial fishermen use huge rectangular pens, lined with nets, with kelp suspended inside them. Herring are allowed into the nets and kept there for several days while they spawn, and then allowed to escape. Herring roe on kelp, komochi kombu, is a delicacy for sushi lovers, especially in Japan.

Mid-summer, during an outgoing minus four-foot tide, gentle breezes lift salty air while the sea peels back to expose a huge expanse of the seabed. From a boulder high above, I stand like a farmer in the field overseeing the kelp and its entire food chain on the sea floor now visible at my feet. When I first saw our cabin three years ago, the idea of stepping out of city life to enjoy the simple rhythms of nature pulled at me. The secluded site surrounded by spruce and hemlock, and the beautiful view across a five-mile expanse of Lynn Canal towards the mountains near Glacier Bay made me smile, sigh deeply and want to stay. Since then, experiences like watching today's ebbing tide have strengthened my first impression.



Out My Window by Beatrice Franklin, UAS Staff, Juneau
Oil on canvas

Kelp beds are a new world for me. People usually call kelp a plant, although kelp are actually large brown algae, the largest type of seaweed. Algae, including seaweed and kelp, are simpler structures than plants. Most reproduce through spores, not seeds. Kelp anchors to the sea bottom by holdfasts, which are large root-like fingers. Unlike plant root systems, kelp's holdfasts do not transfer nutrients from the soil, but instead, kelp takes nutrients directly from seawater. Kelp's stem, which is called the stipe, connects the holdfast to the leaves, which are called blades. Photosynthetic cells on the blades use energy from the sun, carbon dioxide, and water to create oxygen and carbohydrates as plants do. To absorb as much sunlight as possible, the large varieties of kelp which grow in deep water have gas-filled chambers in the stipe to lift the blades towards the sun. Kelp grows best in cool, clear water with gentle wave action. Two separate varieties, Bull Kelp and Split Kelp, grow in front of our cabin.

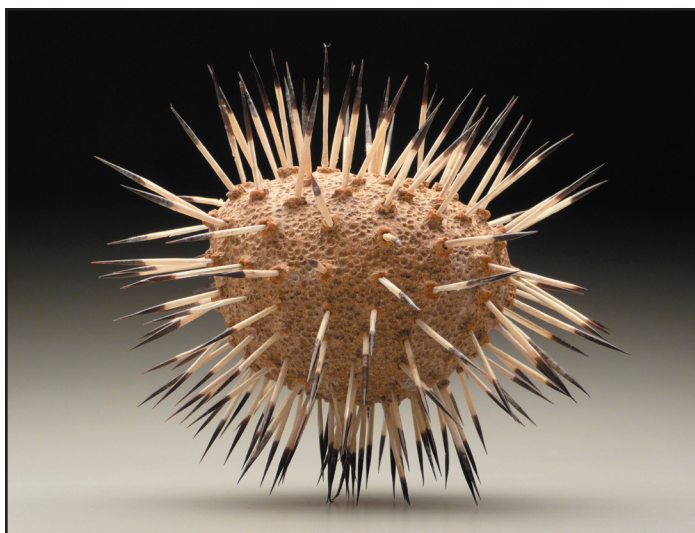
Particles of kelp constantly crumble off, providing a huge amount of food for crustaceans, fish, plankton, bacteria and other algae. At the base of my boulder, masses of mussels, limpets, barnacles, and small black snails hold on against the pull of the tide as they are covered and exposed by seawater twice each day. Each incoming tide brings more kelp particles and plankton to these hungry crustaceans. Approaching the beach, I lift a medium-sized rock and five small crabs, perhaps immature Dungeness, dash for new cover.

Behind me, our tractor's diesel engine rattles in a low persistent idle while Dennis inspects the terrain and plans his next move. When Dennis first set foot here, he saw an inadequate plywood cabin, moorage exposed to high winds, and a strenuous climb up to the

cabin, but something about the place grabbed hold of him, too, so we bought it. Dennis is fixing up the cabin, creating a ramp to pull our skiff out and improving access up the hill. While he hasn't seen the tide so low in all his trips to the cabin, he's chosen to work on projects, and I explore alone.

I walk ahead into the intertidal zone, the seabed exposed between high and low tides, and the amount of marine life surprises me. Broken clamshells litter the scene; it is a challenge to find one whole. Clams eat plankton, which thrives in the kelp bed. Between rocks I see turquoise, pink and flame-orange sea stars, a type of starfish with up to twenty arms. Sea stars are carnivores and eat clams, sea urchin, snails, and fish. Kelp-eating gunnells are under every rock, nestling up to other critters I cannot identify.

A little further along, I begin stepping around Split Kelp, which grows in the area exposed between the minus 2-foot and minus 4-foot tide levels. Split Kelp is a medium-sized kelp; its stipe is less than two feet long and it has one large elongated blade measuring as much as seventy-nine inches long and sixteen inches wide. Split Kelp's broad speckled brown blades create a canopy so dense one cannot see through it to the sea floor when the tide is in. Today, held securely by its holdfasts during the large minus tide, the Split Kelp is totally exposed and flattened out on the sea bottom in acres of a broad slippery, shiny brown mass like thousands of brown, wet trash bags lying on the ground. Although not good for eating because of a bitter taste, this type of kelp is a source of iodide, which it releases when exposed to intense light or drying conditions during low tides. Iodide detoxifies ozone and other oxidants that could otherwise damage kelp, and secondarily removes ozone close to the Earth's surface. Split Kelp



Adaptation by SueAnn Randall, Juneau
Ceramics

is a perennial, but here, looses its large blades to the cold, pounding winter waves. Its holdfast remains affixed to rocks on the sea floor and grows new blades the following spring.

I continue walking to where the flattened Split Kelp is so dense, I struggle to keep my footing on slimy rocks made invisible by it and stop where water threatens the tops of my brown high-topped rubber boots. Bull Kelp and our skiff lie beyond me, past the range of my boots in the sub-tidal zone, where the sea floor is never exposed at low tide. The holding power of each is tested against the force of twenty-three feet of tide change that pulls out of and then rips back into the kelp bed twice a day during today's major tide change cycle.

Bull Kelp is one of the larger kelp and is easy to identify. We dodge its gas-filled bulbs, which look like floating brown-skinned onions, as we weave through the maze of kelp to set anchor. Bull Kelp is the fastest growing seaweed in the world and dies back each fall, growing from a spore to a mature plant in a single season, sometimes at a rate of five inches per day. I measured the stripe of one that washed ashore at thirty-three feet long. Its blades at the end were missing and could have extended another ten feet. From our perspective, Bull Kelp just pops to the surface from nowhere one spring day and stays for the whole summer, brown heads bobbing in the waves. Bull Kelp is edible and particularly popular, both fresh and pickled. Long ago, Bull Kelp was a staple for Alaska Natives in other ways, too. The bulb made a lightweight storage container for fish oil and deer suet. The stripe is very tough and was used for fishing lines, nets, ropes, harpoon lines and anchor lines.

Standing at the water's very edge where sea floor and four-foot minus tide meet, the tide is in equilibrium, slack water. Around me, the kelp holds fast and activity continues around it. Plankton, krill, bacteria and small algae feed on and lie here unseen amongst the kelp blades. Clusters of salmon fry will dart here next spring. These and the crustaceans I've just passed will be eaten in turn by larger fish, mammals and birds. Today, humpback whales graze just outside the Bull Kelp, feeding on herring, plankton and krill. On other days we see seals, sea lions or land otters right in the midst of the kelp, feeding on fish and crustaceans. At summer's end, Coho salmon on their way to spawning grounds will browse here, too. In front of me, everything in the kelp bed from krill to whales produces nitrogen wastes, and nitrogen is the nutrient kelp needs most for growth. Cycles of four-foot minus tides happen only a handful of times each year and my current vantage point is accessible for less than a half hour. At the fulcrum of the tide and in the heart of the kelp bed, I feel anchored.

As I ponder the interconnectivity of marine life around me, the tide changes and begins to flood. Walking back toward land, I notice Dennis has worked his way farther up the hill with the tractor. Dennis is a carpenter both by trade and by nature. While I seek out my holdfasts, my anchors, he builds his.

I retreat to the boulder I started from and kick an empty sea urchin shell. Sea urchins are known to destroy kelp beds by chewing through live kelp stripes, but here they are held in

check by sea stars, land otter, seals, sea lions and mink. I happen to glance behind me and see a small sleek brown animal, which I guessed to be a marten the first time I saw it. Dennis says it is a mink and he is right. Mink can swim and love gunnels, urchin and other crustaceans, but marten do not. This must be the animal that left the sea urchin shell. The mink is curious and close. We startle each other when I turn around, and our eyes meet fleetingly.

Two simple forms of algae, Bull Kelp and Split kelp, anchor a healthy marine community and the community blends together in balance. When I look across the water, I see a group of whales slowly leading a large whale-watching catamaran past the cabin. A little farther out, one boat checks a shrimp pot set out earlier and another, anchored, jigs for halibut. As the tide gradually trickles into and then submerges the kelp bed, it is easy to overlook what draws the whales, shrimp, and halibut, and what ultimately holds them to this area.

I walk up the hill and examine the new section of path. Dennis turns off the tractor, we go into the cabin and he opens a beer. As we stand at the window, watching the water and boats, I talk about the minus tide and he discusses attempts to dislodge an old, stubborn root. We've both drawn closer to this place today, just in different ways.

All too soon, fall is here. The multitude of snails I saw along the shore during summer has already retreated in a massive formation to deeper water for protection from winter. The first fall storms have already rolled large rocks along the beach like marbles and the water temperature is dropping. In September, rafts of seaweed wash ashore and in October, the kelp bed begins to thin. Dennis and I reluctantly close up the cabin for the winter. It is getting too dark, too cold; and the water's too rough for us, also. At low tide we row the inflatable raft through the kelp quagmire toward the skiff for the last time this year. Every time the oars go into the water they get tangled in the remaining ropy Bull Kelp. A group of ten rotting Bull Kelp twisted around each other in a tight coil has wrapped itself around our anchor chain. I tug on one of the stripes and cannot break it, but have to unwrap it instead. Some of the Bull Kelp's brown floats are rotting though, and they break as I throw the heavy clump out of the way. As we lift anchor and depart, the kelp, too, is breaking hold, and like us, will drop anchor again next spring.

Bookshelves

Unlike the rest of the house, the shelves are haphazard in both their construction and their contents, with books stacked nearly to the ceiling. Many of the books here in my father-in-law's study have not been opened in years, and are buried deep behind other rows of books and old photographs. On his desk, his computer monitor is perched precariously on a stack of old *Time/Life* books, the kind with black and white photos of exotic places and bioluminescent deep sea fish. I poured over books like these as a kid, before we could Google bioluminescence instead. The juxtaposition of these, the dated books and the computer tan computer monitor, seem a fitting tribute to my father-in-law, always a man of ideas and words.

There are other things in this tiny room at the top of the house as well: old tape recorders, an outdated globe, a smattering of antiques, the light touch, I'm sure, of my mother-in-law. But the words, both in books and in notes, are what really tell the important stories.

I don't know when my father-in-law began to write the notes that litter his study and much of the house like confetti. The notes were typed and trimmed to tiny, tidy, precise pieces of paper. Some of the later notes would turn up in his own spidery handwriting. They now remain taped all around his computer even though he died in May. "Press this to turn computer on." "Phone number for the bank." "Email account: access through Comcast." "If this does not work, try rebooting."



In the Flow by Kelli K. Burkinshaw, Juneau
Photography

One telling picture on a shelf in the study is of his own father in front of something iPhone toting grandchildren would be unable to identify as a computer. His father's face is alight with amazement as he stares at a screen; my father-in-law had programmed that beast, with a hard drive the size of a desk, to say "Happy Anniversary" to his parents. Then, in the early 1970's, my father-in-law was a computer prophet, insisting that people would have computers on their desks someday, imagining the computer as a way to manage the ideas he loved.

My mother-in-law says she knew something was wrong when he wasn't using the computer anymore. He would still retreat to his study for long hours, but he no longer emerged with manila envelopes ready to send his plays to small theater companies. He no longer had anything new to take to the writing groups they belonged to. The ideas were retreating.

She said he also stopped reading those books on the shelves: the ones he nearly knew by heart, the ones written by friends, the ones given by children. The words, which he had loved, had become a puzzle to him, no longer a comfort, no longer a lens through which he questioned the world. The pursuit of truth through reasoning left him. And when this left him, he lost one of his essential truths.

But for me, I have to wonder if the notes were really the first sign, his first defense against the disease that was stealing him slowly. Here after his death, they feel ominous, like unrecognized boundaries in a war no one else understood.

Earlier this week I found a one-act play on his desk written some time earlier. In it, the main character purchases a computer program that will quiz him daily to monitor his cognitive functioning. If the computer determines he has "The Big A," it will feed him a cyanide-laced biscuit. Family members, the protagonist justifies, are too weak, too hindered by their love to see reason. They could not do what needed to be done. Loved ones refuse reason in the face of an unreasonable disease.

I kept the play to share with my husband not today, but later, when doubt surfaces, when he questions what he knows about his father. For when he struggles to remember him fully formed.

Now my husband is in this room of his father's, staring at the books. Which ones matter now? Which ones do we ship home to add to our own bookshelves? Which ones can be hauled to the used bookstore? Which ones tell us the most about who his father was?

It is possible that none of the books alone tell us much at all. It is possible that the room itself is most telling. The books, the computer, the drafts of his plays, the photos. Maybe it is really the whole of this room that tells who he was, like a set of one of his plays.

It's a Small World Parade Float

I am the oriental rug of the room that has been stepped on and told I look nice at the same dinner party.

because I am Korean skinned, white educated and flat faced
I have had to renegotiate my life between raising fists and faking it
I have been the angriest craziest laziest brownest palest shyest highest
most offensive girl in the room

without talking

so like every good orphan
I'm hoping
that in all this commotion I can be whole for a moment
look with one eye to one mother and the other to the ocean
and maybe this time

this time
I will not be so small that the doctors will wonder whether anyone will buy me

and this time
I'm not gonna cry the entire plane ride across the Pacific

because on my best days
I am the picture, in the envelope, in the best of hopes
I am the dream deferred, exchanged and sold
rags to riches goodbye kisses it's a small world parade float

after all

and I'm waving
elbow elbow wrist wrist

holding together all of this
pb&j on my chopsticks
jahp chae bi bim bap hot dish
a broken and balanced
work in progress

and if ever a daughter was split
this time
we won't know it.

Sexy

they say the asian woman will love you long time
dragon lady, sex kitten
butterfly play date
in kama sutra positions
wild
and slanted
with my eyes closed

and they say the latin lover lives la vida loca
a bedtime pool boy seduction story
dark eyes, you sweet talker
swarthy all night bed rocker
again and again,
in spanish

so we giggle at our secret
as the sun slowly lights up our skins
our colors exposed and radiant
tender breaths on our braided body

that they don't know our heartbeat
is just the warm wind that makes the chimes sing
on a still morning.

Death by Algebra

If you're reading this, it probably means that I'm dead. You, and others, I assume, are standing in a room, surrounded by bodies, wondering how this tragedy could have been avoided. I don't know why I'm writing this. I guess it's just a hunch I have. I should be doing something to save myself but I haven't figured out if I'm just crazy, or if the Algebra teacher is really trying to kill me.

I hope I'm just crazy.

Today I'm taking notes as I do every day. I arrived on time. My laptop is poised and my book is ready. I bought an expensive cup of coffee that I cannot afford, specifically to help fight the battle my brain is about to undertake. She walks into the room. She seems harmless enough. She's smiling.

Then she strikes. "Today we're going to be working on Section 3.1, histograms, pie charts, and line graphs. An interesting thing to note on this section is that the plural of axis is axes. I think it's interesting that not a lot of people know that and they use it incorrectly. It won't be on a test or anything but I'm trying to differentiate between the two since they do sound similar and should be used correctly. So please make a note of it. Here, I'll write it on the board."

Boom! Her first blow is a nasty one. I hear pencils dropping. I turn my head and see my classmates with heavy eyelids and nodding heads. I struggle to stay involved with the lecture.

"There are four quadrants in a line graph and they go clockwise. I mean, counter clockwise. Right? Ya, counter clockwise. So the upper left, no wait, the right is quadrant I, then the quadrant to the left is II. The one underneath that is III and then IV is this one right here." She points at the quadrant and glances over her shoulder. She's checking to see what kind of damage she's done. Not enough. My head starts to drop a little. I fight it. She narrows her eyes. She sees I'm weak and attacks again. She's a wicked, unmerciful woman.

But she seems so nice.

"Every point has an x coordinate and a y coordinate which would translate to a first coordinate and a second coordinate. That would be that the x coordinate comes first and the y comes second. So if I were to write it out it would look something like this (1,2). If I wanted to plot this on a line chart I would go over one point, count one, and up two points, count one, two." I hear heads plopping onto desks around me. One rolls across the floor. She glances at it. "Does anybody have any questions?" She mocks us and turns back to the chalkboard. I look at the kid next to me. His face is flat on his homework, drool oozing out of his mouth. His vacant eyes are staring blankly into the distance behind me. Too bad. I liked that kid.

"If you look at the line graph in example 2 you'll see a collection of points. This would be a good time to practice your coordinates. Can anyone tell me which is the y coordinate?"

A low groan comes from the back of the room. It sounds like a zombie being pulled from a crypt.

"That's right. It's the vertical."

She is oblivious to our pain. She's done this before.

The room is starting to smell like burnt hair. It reminds me of the way my dog smelled

right after he died.

"Did I mention that the plural of axis is axes?" Oh, she swiftly wields the battle axe of math. A low, but effective, blow. We are powerless. Bodies slump back in their chairs. I hear low gasps. Something warm and thick oozes out of my ear. It must be my brain.

I can barely type.

I'm fading in and out of consciousness. It's becoming hard to breathe. I can hear her voice in a low muffle. She sounds like one of the teachers on the Peanuts cartoon. "Bwaa bwaa bwaa bwaa bwaa bwaa." A chair moves. Someone makes a run for the door. Someone's going for help! We'll be saved!

"If you could just wait one second," our teacher hammers the last nail into the coffin. "I just want to finish this last point." She smiled. I saw her smile.

I am cold now. I'm just so cold.ds/mf,ssaa



Friend by Rob Korpela, Juneau
Photoshop/Coral Painter X

mirabile visu

Even in darkest winter
the fruit from our young Japanese cherry
comes melting onto the limbs
in creamy pink and yellow icing.
You do not question the way trees behave,
bright coconut bonbons appearing
from time to time,
always when you are hungriest
for the daddy magic.

You're six now, and I wonder how much longer
I can keep this going,
my concealed hand holding the candy box
as you romp toward the tree
to claim your prize.

The way you tilt your head
in the icicle sun when I call
"I see a bonbon on the tree!"
reminds me of the wind-battered raven,
perched and cocked in the alder opposite,
his eye on the garish treat too –
he knows that nothing in this world
appears without purpose,
that sweet things may be strangely placed
and the best question is always the simplest:
"Who put them there?"

Exchange II

Sometime in the short night
while the goblin retreats behind the billowing
white of the mountain outside your window
after I think that truest thought
and lean in to watch the baby twitch of your eyelid
whispering a kiss on your brow

I disturb the bedclothes of my own bed
feeling the light protest of her hip
the gathering of Scot woolen more tightly about her now
a sigh
a cough
my midnight nocturne

Sometime in the short night
you jolt awake and tiptoe in
the sheets billow and settle with the added warmth
then all at once five minutes or hours later she rises
like a haunted thing, her shadow bruising the wall
not sleepwalking she retreats to a room empty of us

how strange that I should climb in with one love
and wake up with another, hold close your drowsing form
and dream of the way I used to your mother

F A D E¹

Ketchikan is disappearing.
Beneath increasing layers of asphalt and tourists,
Asphalt and tourists,
Underneath it all is an old wooden town.

Last week I saw men toppling
The skeletal frame of McKay's Marine Ways down.

Fall approaches,
The Centennial committee is in high gear.
Walmart's coming and Race's is closing.
Tongass Avenue is better for a mile of road
At least for another year.

As we round the century mark,
The old city limits cannot contain
This hustling need for change.
Everywhere we push out further,
Up hills, across ridges, into and over the sea.

After not quite thirty summers here
I've no place claiming I knew the frontier.

Still, it's strange to see the familiar fade
Like the high school girls I used to know
Now, quick steps in darker hose and tinted hair
They pass, they have places to go.

¹ This poem first appeared in *Ice-Floe*.



Borne Alone by Jane Terzis, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on panel



Continuum by Jane Terzis, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on panel

The Week Before St. Valentine's

(LINDSEY and PHIL are lying in bed, Lindsey completely nude, sprawled on her stomach, face in the pillows. Phil is wide awake with a troubled look on his face, sitting up with his arms around his drawn-up knees. He is wearing a t-shirt and is under sheet and blankets.)

PHIL The skylight window screen fell down during the night. (pause)
I replaced it.

(Lindsey mumbles something and shifts)

PHIL I don't think too many bugs came in, though. (swats at one)
Maybe because we had all the lights off. (another pause)
Lindsey, I've been hearing things. I can't sleep.

LINDSEY *(looking up)* What time is it?

PHIL *(without looking at alarm clock)* Just past six.

LINDSEY God. Neither of us has to be up for another hour.

PHIL You know, my back has been having these spasms sometimes.
But it's the strangest thing: I called your doctor for an appointment
and he said he wasn't taking new patients.

LINDSEY I have some muscle relaxants in my purse.

PHIL Chiropractors always need patients. That's weird, isn't it,
not being able to fit me in.

LINDSEY Mmm.

PHIL I drove too fast through Newtown yesterday.

LINDSEY *(face back in pillow)* What?

PHIL I felt like I needed to be here at home.

LINDSEY *(a little less groggy)* Because?

PHIL I don't know.

LINDSEY Why is this important now?

PHIL Don't you want to talk?

LINDSEY I want to sleep. For another hour.

PHIL I'm worried.

LINDSEY If the house isn't on fire there's nothing to be worried about that can't wait. *(pause)* Did you check on her?

PHIL Yes, I checked on her. I've also fed the cat and gathered strawberries.

LINDSEY *(head pops up)* What? You've been up already?

PHIL I told you I couldn't sleep. }

LINDSEY Phil, why are you doing this to me so early? } *simultaneously*

PHIL *(exasperated)* I'm sorry. Go back to sleep.

LINDSEY *(after a pause)* Hey --

PHIL No, you're right. This is stupid of me to --

LINDSEY Something really is bothering you.

PHIL Something's been bothering me, but I don't know what. Or why.

LINDSEY *(turning on her side, so the audience can't see her face; she maintains this pose for the rest of the scene)* Okay, I'm all the way awake now. Talk.

PHIL I hate that.

LINDSEY What?

PHIL The way you take over. Why should you be any more awake than I am?

LINDSEY I am trying hard, but I have no idea what you're talking about.

PHIL Okay. Okay, look. I'm talking to you honestly, trying to make sense of my feelings. I don't understand them at all.

LINDSEY Feelings.

PHIL Fear feelings.

LINDSEY Fear feelings.

PHIL Like, why was I driving so fast? I always slow down when I come to Newtown because I know the cops wait there for people who don't slow down to 40 fast enough. I know this. And still I raced through. It's like I wanted to get home before you did, and I didn't know why, I just had this impulse.

LINDSEY What time were you coming through Newtown?

PHIL Maybe half past five.

LINDSEY I was already home. I picked baby up from Mom's and came straight here.



Bottled Up by SueAnn Randall, Juneau
Wood-fired stoneware



Untitled by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on Panel

PHIL You weren't in Newtown?

LINDSEY What? No, why would I be?

PHIL I thought I saw your car. I mean, I thought I saw you in your car.

LINDSEY (*a pause*) That's why you began speeding?

PHIL Were you in Newtown anytime yesterday?

LINDSEY Yes, you know I was.

PHIL At the chiropractor's.

LINDSEY Yes. But not at 5:30.

PHIL What if I said I was wrong about the time, that I was really coming through at 4:30?

LINDSEY (*sighing*) What if you did?

PHIL What?

LINDSEY What if you said that? You asked me what my reaction is if you said you were wrong about the time, I asked you if that's what you were saying.

PHIL (*after a pause*) How can you do that? How can you pull that stuff at 6 in the

morning?

LINDSEY *(a short, bemused laugh)* What?

PHIL You turn things upside down. You frighten me more than ever because of your cool calm.

LINDSEY Phil...I'm going to make some coffee.

PHIL Oh, no. Not until you tell me what the hell you were doing at the hotel.

LINDSEY *(tossing hair)* The hotel.

PHIL The fancy hotel in Newtown, I don't know the name. The only hotel you were at yesterday.

LINDSEY You'd better get to the point.

PHIL I came through Newtown TWO HOURS ahead of when I normally do because I've been so confused about everything. I didn't expect to see you there. Sometimes you're where you say you're going to be, but not always! I've been trying to ignore the inconsistencies, thinking maybe it was me, and I needed to allow you more freedom, understand your schedule. But I still couldn't sleep sometimes, and sometimes I'd curl up next to you and you'd push me away.

LINDSEY I do not.

PHIL You do! You scoot to the other side of the bed and if I try again you put a pillow between us.

LINDSEY Well, how do I know what I'm doing when I'm asleep?

PHIL It wasn't that long ago that you still indulged me every now and then when I wanted a quickie in the morning. Even when you were half-asleep.

LINDSEY *(a beat)* I think it's pretty sad that you're following me around just because we're not having sex as often...

PHIL Lindsey, we never have sex anymore. But that's just circumstantial, isn't it?

LINDSEY What do you mean?

PHIL I mean what you're really into now is keeping things as outwardly normal as possible, so no one asks questions, especially me. So you can "have" your chiropractor and your home life both. So you can have two gigs going February 14th.

(lights dim, then go dark, and a hot spotlight glares down on Phil)

PHIL (said in a fluid voice that begins in a slow, considered way, but builds to a fast snarl that fades out at the end)

I cut what was left of my heart out and made
a valentine for you
it was the reddest shade of ruddy rust when it dried
I wonder if some part of your callousness knew that I cried
when it went snip rip and all that was left
sat in a heap of crepe
with a white construction paper piece of background
wow wow

I want to wrap it up and send it
or better yet
keep it for some future birthday or something of yours
when you ought to be reminded of what we were
And then I'll do one better than the skywriting romeos I'll
make an impression I'll
let you know how deeply I felt the pain I'll
think of something so insane
you won't believe

I think I'll wait until you're walking to your car in a parking lot and pretend to run you down.

Emphasis on "PRETEND."

Well, I may just sneakily drive up behind you and "bump" your rear end, you know, just a little "bump" that doesn't even hurt. I don't think it would, just a jarring little "smack" that knocks you forward a bit, nothing serious.

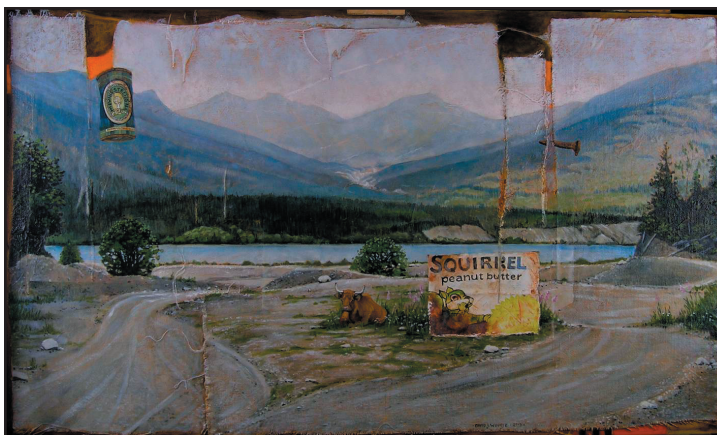
The most that would happen is you might fall down if I misjudge and hit you too hard, but I don't think I'd do that, just a mild concussion, not even a hospital stay, only a quick trip through the air and you probably wouldn't even break any bones, just a sudden "crunch" and very little blood cleanup afterwards and then the fun would start, just sort of BAM! and a quick trip to the E.R.....

Early Morning Conspiracy Theory

Dew infused webs hung tangled
among the blue spruce branches;
the droplets deciphering the strands
like a hidden message written in
invisible ink. The lake, a silent
witness, cloned tall grasses
on its fog muffled surface. The sun,
held hostage behind the frosted
glass sky, was disguised as the moon.
Ravens, spying in pines, conversed
in guttural code. And the eagle feather
I found on the trail was the most
important clue of all.



Westport by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on jute mounted on panel



Boulder Creek by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on cotton and linen mounted on wood panel

ANDREW LOUNSBURY

UAS Student, Douglas

Jumping Off Rooftops

How the hell do cats get up here? I mean, my cats are all about a foot tall, maybe two feet long if you include the tail. How does something that small end up twenty feet above the ground? It's not like there's anything they can use as a stepping stone. Maybe they just jump. Twenty feet. Straight up. That'd be a sight. I'd love to be a cat. I mean, nobody tells a cat what to do. If you yell at a cat for peeing on the rug made for you by your dead grandmother, he just looks at you. Maybe he licks his crotch. It'd be nice to have that kind of freedom. To be totally relaxed, not worrying about how you're going to buy groceries this week. Or freaking out because you just slept through class again. Or stressing because you can't buy that plane ticket home. Cats don't care about anything. I'd love to be a cat.

Overlapping the cats' paw prints are my own. They vary in size—the oldest ones, faded from years of sun and not so much rain, are probably fives. Today's are tens. They wander all over the place, giving absolutely no thought to where they came from or where they might end up. That's probably why I love my parents' roof so much: I can drift. The whole world is all about forcing you to take a particular direction. Go to school. Graduate. Go to college. Graduate. Go to grad school. Graduate. Work. Work some more. Die. Whatever happened to freedom of choice? If I don't want to go to college, I'm lazy. If I don't want to get a job, I'm a leech. If I don't graduate, I'm a failure. The world should let you wander as you see fit. I don't need direction; I'm perfectly content to float aimlessly around my roof, listening to the shingles crack and splinter beneath my feet.

Those shingles are probably my favorite part of my roof. By all accounts they're of horrible quality. They crack and splinter and slide with almost every step, sending dirt and leaves and cigarettes cascading down to the gutter. I probably owe my life to those shingles; they gave

me traction when I would lose my footing a little too close to the edge, dropping their cigarettes to lend me a hand. I feel safer around those shingles than just about anywhere else. Most people don't understand that. But those people would just take a drag off their cigarettes and watch me fall.

Here's a small bit of advice: never smoke a cigarette on a wooden rooftop. Very rarely does it end well. My rooftop is littered with old cigarettes. Some are smoked down to the filter, others are almost untouched. Most of them aren't even mine. Sometimes I would bring my sister up here, as one of those sibling bonding moment, things. She would usually light one up. Occasionally I would join her. Most of the time we didn't say anything beyond the usual how's life bullshit. Kinda wish we had. Would've made those rooftop cigarettes more than just cigarettes. Probably would have been able to bond over something more than furiously stomping out embers, trying to stop the house from burning down. Dad would know we'd been up here if he came home and the house was on fire. Yea, don't smoke cigarettes on a wooden rooftop. Never turns out well.

My friends and I used to drink on this roof—Jose, Jack, the Captain—all good men. People usually think I'm pretty stupid for getting drunk up here. What if you fell off? How did you get down? Let me tell you, it's a lot easier to get down when you're intoxicated. The process is actually quite simple. Step one: wander around in a drunken stupor until you find the ladder you used to get up here in the first place. Step two: mutter incoherently for five to ten minutes, as appropriate, regarding the many dangers of climbing down a wobbling ladder in your currently impaired state. Step three: choose an edge of the roof and peer tentatively over, swearing profusely at your predicament. Step four: launch yourself over the edge. Throw in a running start for added effect. Step five: pray to whatever god you believe in that the landing doesn't hurt. It usually does.

In my experience there are two approaches to jumping off rooftops. The more common method is to sprint towards the edge and launch yourself off. Handy if you happen to be afraid of heights, but more often than not it backfires horrendously. It may help when it comes to actually making the leap, but jumping without looking is just stupid. The landing is often ridiculously painful, usually resulting in some variation of a broken bone. The second method is to carefully evaluate every aspect of the jump. How far you'll fall. How much it'll hurt. How much safer you are among those shingles. After that you throw it all away and just jump. That kind of jump speaks volumes. There's something to be said about someone who can leap from the safety of their perch, knowing full well how much it'll hurt when they hit the ground.

I normally get pretty mixed responses when I tell people about my rooftop escapades. Most people think of them as exemplifying my youthful stupidity. These people are normally older—around forty or fifty. They've already lived—or not lived—through their teenage years and use their curse of hindsight to pass judgment on me. "Because I can" is usually not a good enough explanation for these people. Others are utterly horrified. Most of the time they're pretty set in their ways and can't see how anything could possibly be gained by taking risks. The final reaction is my favorite. Unanimously held by teenage males, they're completely enthralled and rush off to try it for themselves. They don't pass judgment, and they're at least willing to take a risk—even if they do it for the wrong reasons. They do it because I already did. They should do

it to remind themselves that they can.

The best time to visit my roof is just before sundown. Besides the obvious aesthetic appeal of a California sunset, I love being up there at night. I go up before sunset because, well, it's easier to climb a ladder when you can see. A lot of people—particularly Californians—have no concept of what “darkness” really means. They'll wander the streets, enjoying the nightlife under the fluorescent glow of orange streetlights. On my roof it gets totally and completely dark. The kind of dark where you stick out your hand and it disappears. Where you forget where you are ten seconds after getting there. Where your white Nikes are lost to the blackness. Such is the nature of my roof at night, where there are no fluorescent orange lamps to pollute your solitude. I can climb up and be totally invisible. Usually I do it to get away from life. Sometimes I do it so I have a place to think. I've read a lot of journals that say humans are social creatures, most at home among large groups, where they can feed off each other's energies. Those people have never climbed my roof at night. They've never disappeared.

The thing I find most entertaining about my roof is the view. Actually, the view sucks. All you can really see is the street and the neighbors' houses. The people are what make it entertaining. I love watching people. Okay, we've reached the point where I come off as a stalker, and you'll just have to take my word that I'm not standing at your window with a camcorder. What I mean by “I love watching people” is that I find it interesting that nobody ever looks up. The dog walkers are focused on their canine companion, wondering if he'll decide to take his next crap in the middle of someone's lawn. Drivers and bike riders are zoned into the street in front of them. Runners are tuned into whatever's playing on their i-pod. They don't stop to enjoy the California sun. They don't stop to marvel at that ridiculously extravagant house they just passed. They don't stop to just look around. They don't stop.

My dad once told me that the purpose of education is to teach you about life. If that's true then most of my education came from wandering around my roof—not my Catholic high school or out of state university. According to my university, life is about losing sleep over tests, essays and lab reports—not having a smoke with your sister or getting drunk with your buddies. High school was even worse. I spent the whole time hearing about the importance of making a leap of faith and all that other bullshit. Four years of a Catholic education and I've never been more set in my convictions as an Atheist. They were so focused on religion they missed the point. A leap of faith is that process of peering over the edge, and praying it won't hurt as much as you know it will.

The last time I was on my roof was this summer, after my parents had it redone. The shingles are clay now—slippery as hell. I can barely stand on them, let alone walk. Any attempt at jumping would probably result in a painful cracking noise and lots of whimpering. The cigarettes are gone, and when I tried to sit I kept sliding toward the edge. My parents also had a skylight put in. Funnels all the light from the kitchen right into my face. Sucks up there now. The ladder I used to get up there broke on my way down—toppled over as I was climbing. I had all summer to wish things had never changed. That I could still set up the ladder and climb up to my roof. That I could still get drunk and take leaps of faith. Now I spend my time wondering how the hell the cats manage to get up there. Watching them run and play and enjoy their freedom.

INTERVIEW

By Josh Carter, Tidal Echoes Senior Editor

Staying in the Room with Ernestine Hayes

It's always nice to interview someone you know, but that still didn't assuage my nerves when, minutes before the scheduled interview was to take place, I realized I'd purchased the wrong kind of batteries for my tape recorder. I rushed off to the store as fast as I could and was a mere fifteen minutes late; Ernestine Hayes smiled and said, "I'd given up on you!"

Except for some difficulties pressing the "record" button, our interview went smoothly after that, and Ernestine Hayes proved to be the same humble, humorous woman she is when she's teaching a class at UAS. As an aspiring writer myself, it was enlightening to hear, first-hand, one woman's journey in getting her first book published, and extremely refreshing to not have the process sugar-coated or toned down for the work-a-phobic. I hope every other aspiring writer will take away as much from this as I did.

How long have you wanted to be a writer?

Well, because I was an only child to a single mother who read all the time—because back in those days, long ago, there was no television in Juneau, no video games or things to do except play cards or read—I read all the time, and that leads to writing. And so, probably, ever since I learned how to read and got started reading books I probably had it in me to want to write them as well.

Did you have a favorite book when you were little?

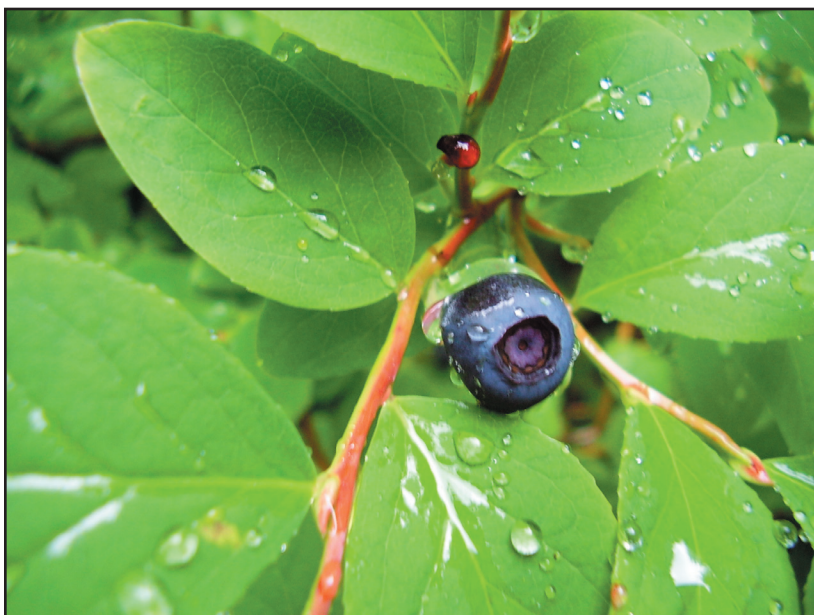
I worked my way through the library where the city museum is on 4th Street, and then after I got older I worked my way through different genres, different mainstream titles, and before that it was comic books. I was pretty voracious when I was younger, and I just read anything and if it struck me as interesting I pursued it, so my tastes have changed over the years as I think they will, and I had different favorite writers, different favorite topics, and different favorite styles of genre as the years went on.

Did you have a favorite writer, then, or a writer you came back to year after year?

I quit high school in the tenth grade and so I wasn't exposed to what the system thought would be what I should read, so a lot of things that get read in high school I didn't read. I would just find a writer who told stories well and would read everything of theirs and go on. I liked Nabokov very early on. That's probably the only one that I can think of that I liked early on that I still admire, because I've followed the path of all different kinds of books and paperbacks, but I think Nabokov is the only one that I've retained.

So would you say Nabokov has influenced your writing style, or are there others who've influenced it moreso?

Maybe not so much influenced my writing style as he made me realize how much there was to aspire to. You know, he had such a powerful control of language that I realized putting words together can have its own effect, beyond telling a good story.



Blueberry by Richard Stokes, Juneau
Photography

Was there any point in time when you thought to yourself, “I’ve made it as a writer!”

Oh no. I was pretty happy when the University of Arizona Press decided they wanted my book. I was pretty happy about that, but there are all sorts of things in it I wish I could change and improve on, so I don’t think I’ve made it as a writer. I think getting my book published by a good press was an accomplishment, but I don’t think it means I’ve made it at all.

It must have been pretty cool when you won the American Book Award. How did that feel?

I was really excited about that. I was probably as excited when I was a finalist for the Kiriya Prize, you know, because it’s international and has a pretty broad group from which it draws. After the fact I was pretty happy that I had been a finalist for the PEN USA award¹, but I didn’t know that while it was happening. I didn’t realize it until the following year when I was notified that as a finalist I would be a judge for that year’s award. Maybe even more than that when I read some of the reviews and I can see by what they wrote that they got what I was trying to do, and I think it means even more to have one person somewhere write a review or a paper and say something in it that I know, “okay, they got it.” So that’s even more gratifying.

¹ The Kiriya Prize recognizes exceptional fiction from South Asia and the Pacific Rim; the PEN USA Award is an annual award for writers west of the Mississippi River.

What, other than your own life's story, inspired you to write *Blonde Indian*?

You know, I ended up in the Masters of Fine Arts program up in Anchorage and I wanted to skedaddle back home as fast as I could, and one of the requirements was a book length thesis so I started gathering everything I'd ever written and putting it together to see if it would stick, and gradually it emerged. Well, relatively gradually. I mean I did it in two years—as fast as I could—but it revealed its structure and it emerged on its own.

When you say you put everything you'd ever written together, does that mean you'd kept journals and notes throughout the years?

No. I really admire people who can keep journals—especially color coded and dated chronologically since they turned five—but I'm the kind of person that if I have a pen I'll write it on my hand and hope that I still remember it before I wash my hands. But I have had scraps of paper that I've jotted things down on, things I've typed, thoughts and ideas I've kept on the computer, quite a few papers I'd written for my undergraduate classes, and I had newspaper articles that I'd written, so they all just sort of came together and I saw that they could echo themes and repeat images. I've never really kept a journal, but I'll try to remember to write something down if it strikes me and I want to remember it.

Would you recommend aspiring writers do this as well?

I think everybody should write down every thought they have. I'll think of something and go, "Wow! That's great!" and then I tell myself, "That's branded in my brain—I'll never forget it because it's so brilliant," and then I forget it immediately. I think everybody should just carry a pencil and a piece of paper and write things down—observations they have, people they see, snippets of dialogue they overhear. But I'm the first to confess I don't do that.

As a writer, are there any other practices or techniques you think could be helpful for aspiring writers?

I think responding to assignments with a larger work in mind is probably one of the things I really try to tell students; to back up and try to have a more global perspective of what you're writing so that it will fit together at some point. I think it not only serves your work, but allows themes that are inside you to emerge, and things your subconscious is working on to sort of start going into your writing. The other thing would be to write in the style of someone you admire. When a painter wants to paint, they paint in the style of Van Gogh or something, they try to copy it, and I think that's a good practice for writers. But the most important advice I've ever gotten was from Ron Carlson when he said, "Stay in the room." And that's the one we don't want to hear. You mean it's work? You mean I've got to work? Stay in the room.

On the subject of "staying in the room," did you ever feel like giving up when writing *Blonde Indian*?

No, I never felt like giving up when I was writing *Blonde Indian*, but I certainly had given up many times before then when I was just writing on my own. I wrote a lot on my own, and was very easily discouraged. After I decided to go to college at the age of 50 and started

writing for my classes, I learned discipline and learned to persevere beyond discouragement, so by the time I got to graduate school and was putting *Blonde Indian* together the thought of quitting was not quite so tempting to me.

Your book uses what's called a "braided narrative," which is essentially when you have more than one interconnected narrative going at the same time. Did you write each narrative on its own or did you write each section piece by piece as they appear in the book?

I wrote each one on its own, and then I braided it.

Did you have any pieces published before *Blonde Indian*?

I had some things published in journals, and then I did that monthly opinion column for a year and a half for the *Juneau Empire*. I had a short story that isn't included in *Blonde Indian* called "Native Spirits" that does have Old Tom in it. I had that published and it won the little *Explorations*² award here at UAS3, the Native Writer award, and a few other things; the part in *Blonde Indian* where I go out and see all those killer whales was published in the *Traveler's Tales* Alaska anthology.

How has being a Native Alaskan influenced your writing?

Well, it certainly has given me a lot of content! There's just no end of things to write about, even now. I didn't know it at the time it was happening, but I think because of the way I was raised by my grandmother—and because I was raised, let's face it, so long ago—I think that it influenced my worldview to the point where I still embrace animism, and I think that that's something that was given to me when I was really small, so that can't help but come out in my writing in *Blonde Indian*. And so not only my experience but also my perspective has been influenced by the fact that I am an Alaska Native woman and I lived the 20th Century Alaska Native experience. And here I am living the 21st Century Alaska Native experience!

Overall, what exactly did your writing process for *Blonde Indian* look like?

Well, a lot of it was in response to assignments and deadlines, which are the greatest inspiration in the world. And then when I started putting it together when I went up to get my MFA and I knew I needed to produce a book-length thesis, I began writing everything with an eye towards the larger work, which is why I encourage people to do that. It worked for me and it was a good thing. I just bumbled on to it because I was in such a hurry, so I try to give that advice to people who might not have bumbled on to it yet. It was because of deadlines and assignments that I got *Blonde Indian* done, and then I sent it out and then, you know, you'd think when you get it done your work is finished, but when you get it done your work has just begun. So I had a lot of editing and revising and there was some organic structural revision I needed to do so it would conform to what I wanted it to be, and then there was a lot of editing and polishing. And now, it's pretty much the same thing. I have a couple of books that are about

² *Explorations* with the predecessor to *Tidal Echoes*.

halfway done, but I just can't get finished with them, and then I have another idea for another book I'd like to get started. But since all my deadlines now have to do with my classes I spend a lot more creativity on designing syllabi than I do on my writing that I should be doing. And e-mail. I spend a lot of time crafting my e-mail when I should be writing the book! When students are in class, they don't realize what a gift assignments and deadlines are. Oh no! I'm being workshopped on Tuesday!—that's just the greatest inspiration.

As a creative writing professor, do you have any other words of wisdom for aspiring writers?

Stay in the room. Write everything down. Fall in love with your own words. Be open to other people's responses to your work, because I think it's a leap that we have to take—sometimes we just think, "I have something to spill onto the paper," and "Oh, my work is finished because I've been inspired." But my experience has led me to the conclusion that writing is a dialogue that is not fulfilled until the reader picks up the work. And the reason that I'm convinced of that is I know when I pick up a book and read it, I bring all of my experience to it, and all the imagery in it I bring to it and whatever it elicits from me. And if we turn that around and realize, "Oh, that happens to our writing, too!" we realize that we are engaged in a dialogue that has to have the other end of it, the reader. Then it isn't all about us. I think that's very important for writers to understand, "It isn't all about me." It's about what my reader brings to it and gets from it. So I think that's important; it's a lesson that not all creative writers arrive at.

Thank you for your time! I just have one last question: if you could be any species of Pacific salmon, what would you be and why?

Let's see: there's Pink, Silver, King, Sockeye, and Chum. I would probably be Sockeye, just because they're the oiliest! They've got the reddest flesh, they're delicious, and they're the best for smoking. So I'd be Sockeye because they make the best smoked fish.

*Ernestine Hayes is an assistant professor at UAS and is the author of *Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native Memoir*, winner of the 2007 American Book Award. She is a grandmother of four and currently resides in Juneau.*

After Neruda By Way of Bly (Tenure)

They tied me to a long rope outside the barricade
Until one desertion forced me to the stoop
Where I fed on dampened scraps I found at my soiled feet
Then treachery placed me three breaths inside the jealous door
Where I, a woman meant to live from season to season,
Now lived from week to week.

Collecting rubbish and remorse underneath my untrimmed nails
I tended failing gardens beneath the white-washed tower
Building tunnels from the gardens to the graves.

Near the end of my sentence the prisoners in the tower
Weary of my impertinence, called down instructions
That I was not qualified to join in their distinctions
And I would no longer be allowed to tend their garden.
But I had found sorrow and joy and regret
I had found a field of wild flowers. I had found the bloom of delight.



Magic of Water by Kelli K. Burkinshaw, Juneau
Photography

Old Tom Finds a Whale

One day Old Tom walking along the beach
Happens to see a whale
He keeps his eye on that whale
It appears to be resting
On the rocks
Some might say
Rotting

Then that Old Tom he gathers wood
Maybe the wood is soaked with wine
And dried
And soaked again
And dried
Old Tom builds a fire
And thinks about that whale
Until he gathers the nerve to approach it

Old Tom finds that the whale is dead
He places his fire inside that whale's belly
Probably thinking he can eat some of it

Normally people don't eat such things
But hunger
Makes us act
Below our station

While stirring the fire in that whale's belly,
Old Tom happens to find some fish
Nicely cooked by the fire
And helps himself to dinner
On the beach

This is why Old Tom
Now carries with him
That smell of rotting grease

Old Tom Steals the Light

Old Tom
Walking along the beach
He remembers a young woman
Or actually it is the thought
Of the young woman, the idea of her
That he remembers

He remembers that she lives with her father
In a particularly rich house
Somewhat distant from the town
A house he has never managed to enter
Due to gates and fences
And to her father's prudent supervision

Old Tom decides he will visit her tonight
He builds a fire there on the beach
Smokes himself in cedar
Hums himself up some power
Waits for darkness
Takes control of the thought of her
Takes control you see

Just as the day turns into night
Just as the day gets sleepy
Old Tom climbs the wall
Presents himself to the door
Cup in hand. Water, he says
Drink this wine I mean water
She finds him irresistible

When their child is born he can see
Her father is smitten
So he visits every day
Watching examining studying
That old man
That old man and his thoughts

Old Tom considers the worth
Of the child's playthings
Considers the worth of the child
Considers the worth of the old man's trust
Considers the worth of this world

Research Project

I am presently involved in an ethnographic study of White Euro-North American cultural forms and folk life. This will include a contextual study of Summer Tourism behavior and concurrent research in relevant social displays, particularly public demonstration of dominance directives. I am interested in advancing the work of field-based observation of cultural performances, especially those that feature the oratorical impositional behavior normally associated with socially dominant males of this culture, and the related function of commodities display. One objective of my summer-long research will be to develop a means wherein an ethnoanthropological approach to an examination of White Euro-North American social subgroups can be conducted in a manner that will be seen by the subjects as respectful to and tolerant of their customs. Another particular interest is the interaction between Summer Tourism transient groups and their culturally-related neighbors through whose regional systems they travel. It is my hope that this fieldwork will encourage new attention to these little-studied groups.

I am qualified to investigate this culture on a number of fronts. Currently, I enjoy a temporary appointment in an institution whose faculty and administration are made up almost entirely of members of the White Euro-North American cultural order. I continue an active program of observation, moving freely through the White Euro-North American culture on an almost daily basis. My field inquiry includes unobtrusive note-taking on linguistic performance in the negotiation and re-negotiation of transient social hierarchy, an interest which led to the development of the coming summer research project.

I have lived among the White Euro-North American people for most of my life, and consider myself a scholar of their culture. In many situations, I am accepted by them with little question; indeed there have been times when I believe I was tacitly acknowledged as an honorary White. In other situations where my standing as a non-White person precludes me from participating in their rituals, I am often tolerated as an observer. The geographical area of my studies has been the West Coast of North America, with a double emphasis on the Whites of Northern California and the Whites of Alaska. The topical areas of my studies have included White belief systems; White material culture; and White social symbolism. These topics have been central to my interests throughout my life. My specific interests have led to contemplation of the White traditions practiced in their everyday life that reinforce and support these social and cultural systems. Because White North American life has changed so dramatically within the last two hundred years, bringing them from pioneer families living in one-room shacks, trembling at the forests and the plains, to the success-oriented condo-dwelling consumers of modern day, it is imperative that their culture be acknowledged and recorded as a legitimate field of study before more changes remove the opportunity to observe this intriguing group, most of whom live in constant transition.

I have participated in formal training that reflects my interest in White culture. Examples of White studies courses I've completed are American history, English language, English literature, Western philosophy, and intercultural communications from the perspective

of White Euro-North American instructors. This selection of graduate and undergraduate courses reflects my strong commitment to the folk life and traditions of this cultural group. It is my hope one day to become a professor of White studies, and share the knowledge that a lifetime of living among these ever-fascinating people has gained me.

In my pursuit of White Studies professor status, I will survey Euro-North American social development. Contemplated programs involve my own theatrical performance of their social display and ritual, my own interpretation of the symbolism of their social regalia, and my own explanation of the content of certain of their literary efforts. Other programs will further explore the interaction among selected subgroups. Since White Euro-North Americans have been central to the historical, cultural, and legal development of the current societal entity existing as the "United States," it is expected that the results of my fieldwork will provide future scholars the opportunity to broaden their understanding of these admittedly perplexing people



Guppy (boat) by Linda Blefgen, Juneau
Photography

Arizona Spyder

Arizona Spyder sat on a tree stump at the side of the Willamette River next to the rattling train bridge just outside Eugene, watching the young and old normals frolic and swim and wade in the tame brown river and keeping an eye on anyone who strayed too close to the bridge where wedged in the v-crack on the east side of the structure, Arizona Spyder's gear kept itself quiet in his makeshift camp. It was a suddenly summer day.

A well-honed ability to lay low had saved his ass more than once, such as the several times a year goose-stepping bulls walked up and down the midnight track at slower yards, pounding the sides of the boxcars with metal nightsticks, shouting and ready to roust. Any hobo worth his salt will sit silent, feeling the clanging vibration of mean steel coming close, listening for tones of sadistic intent in the unfriendly hollering voices.

Spyder had come to Eugene three weeks before by way of Roseville, where he'd been tossed off a hotshot because some punk-assed wannabe waved at the bulls, catching their attention and giving them something to do when the long fruit train was delayed at the crossing just outside Loomis. Kicked off, pissed off, and lucky not to be in jail, Spyder started walking, planning to catch out from Roseville on the next thing smoking.

He didn't bother to hitch-hike; nobody in the country road suburbs would pick up a skinny old man dressed in dirty wrinkles, shirt untucked and sun beating down on his sweat-stained unwashed neck. Besides, he'd lost his thumb and index finger on a bad hop outside Spokane a few years ago, and his left hand—his hitch-hiking hand—looked like a claw. He kept walking.

An old Pontiac passed, the man inside looking sternly ahead, two wide-eyed children staring from the back window, the woman in the passenger seat offering a kind slow smile. Arizona Spyder smiled back and brushed the bill of his ball cap, tipping his hobo hat to somebody's mom. He traipsed along the shoulder of the two-lane country road, holding his pace and listening for the train whistles that measured his progress toward his next ride out. An hour or so later the same old car drove by again, u-turned, and pulled around. Spyder heard the car door slam and turned to see the man get out of the car holding a brown bag. Spyder waited in the beating sun, the rising tar smell of country road pavement stinging his squinting eyes.

"My wife wants you to have this," the man said in a furtive voice, more like somebody buying a quarter ounce in a backstreet alley than a do-gooder forced into broad daylight by a sympathetic woman.

Spyder reached for the sack. "Much obliged."

The man saw Spyder's claw, looked away fast. "So," he said. "So. Where you headed?" The man turned to check the car, his children's staring faces, the outline of his wife's unmoving shadow.

"Roseville," Spyder mumbled. "I better be going." He gauged the bag's weight. Must be something to drink, he figured, might be food or even money. "I appreciate this," he told the dumbfounded man. "Be sure to give the family my thanks." He tipped his hat and turned to go, headed for Roseville. A minute later he heard the car start up. The sound of the motor vanishing behind him made him lonelier than all his days riding the rails, all his afternoons standing in food lines, all his nights sleeping in makeshift camps at the end of all his suddenly summer days.

He'd ended up in Eugene knowing there was a fairly good morning food line and a buffet style restaurant not far from the tracks. At a few minutes after two o'clock every weekday, Spyder watched from the alley while some fresh-faced kid in a clean white apron tossed the day's leftovers into the dumpster beside the back entrance to the local all-you-can-eat. As soon as the vacuum door whooshed shut behind the gangly foodworker, Spyder sprinted for the big green container, lifting the heavy lid and grabbing the foil-wrapped packages balanced there on top of the day's other garbage. Only once so far had he been forced to dive all the way into the dumpster, on a day when the garbage men must have come early. He'd climbed in and scooped up the buffet leftovers lying in a heap at the bottom, still-warm packages of saucy chicken wings and perfectly-rounded meatballs accompanied by three kinds of macaroni salad filling the dumpster with the smell of homecooked backporch summer evening meals and remembered distant voices.

One day the kitchen worker came back out and caught Spyder loading his brown paper grocery bag with that night's supper. They stared at each other until Spyder, recognizing hesitant fear on the teenager's face, turned back to harvest his feast. When he was finished, he tipped his hat at the motionless boy still standing at the half-open door, one more foil package forgotten in his apprehensive grip. "Watcha got there, boy?"

"Uh ..." the busboy frowned at the package in his hand. "Oh, right. Ribs."

"Sounds good. Mind if I take it?" The boy's name tag had come loose, was hanging crookedly on the strap of his crumpled apron. "Mike," Spyder read out loud. "Well, thanks, Mike. I appreciate it. My compliments to the chef." As far as Spyder knew, Mike stood there gaping until he turned the corner, highstepping it to his camp under the bridge, already looking forward to salad and barbecue-flavored ribs.

Spyder wasn't from Arizona. After he'd been hopping freights for a couple of years, he got his bandanna and took his rail name. He named himself after the wandering hobo spider, an import to the United States that he'd read about during trips to various libraries, warm and quiet pass-time places where you were usually welcome if you kept yourself reasonably clean and remained meekly civil. Over the years he educated himself about a lot of different subjects, anything that struck his fancy for an hour or a year. He picked up the Arizona part of his name from lying to people about where he was from.

He had almost managed to forget his real hometown. After he was accused of molesting the neighbor's daughter, a brazen giggler lying her way through high school, Spyder (then known by the happier name of Frank Rider) had been advised by local authorities and his family to leave town for awhile. He quit an up and coming job at the insurance mart, kissed his weeping mom goodbye, saluted his dad and younger brother, and lit out on the Burlington run. A few months later he heard that the girl had confessed and his family wanted him back, but by then he belonged to the rails. He kept in touch until he got word that his mom had died. He visited her grave once, ten years ago, but his brother's discomfort and his dad's grim silence shortened his visit to less than a day. He said goodbye with a clumsy hug and spent his last few dollars on a bouquet of yellow flowers he placed on his mother's grave at the edge of the hillside cemetery on the old dirt road north of town. She had always said yellow flowers were her favorite.

He hadn't planned to stay in Eugene for too long, but he met a woman by the name of Nadine in the food line and she seemed like friendly company. Nadine and her dog were living in her old station wagon, making their way up the coast to Seattle. Spyder and Nadine stood in line

every day, enjoying friendly small talk about the weather and her dog. After eating, they walked to a nearby field and lit up roll-your-owns, congratulating their pleasantly full bellies.

"So you're on your way to Seattle?" Spyder asked. "I guess you can't hop freights, what with the dog and all." He rolled a cigarette with his right hand, packing the stringy tobacco tight and licking the glued edge of the thin wheat-colored paper. There was almost nothing he couldn't do better with one full hand and three fingers than other men could do with both hands. It only took a few weeks for his hand to heal after he got it caught in the connection when he tried to jump to the other side of a standing train. He learned then—and never forgot—that any time you get hurt by a train, it's not the train's fault.

It had been a good three weeks since the day they first talked; now they also walked together in the evenings and met most weekend mornings for coffee at a workingman's bar not far from the lines, where a handful of change thrown into a jar on the polished counter earned you one fresh cup and a refill. And every day after the meal, they sat in the field, tobacco to roll and a happy dog to watch play. She told him right away that she and her dog were on their way to Seattle; from there she thought they might sign up on a fishing boat and head on up to Alaska, where she'd been born. "No, I've never hopped a freight," she told him, "but I did ride a train over the Great Divide one time. That was before I got Gypsy, though." She kept a strict eye on the dog.

Spyder envied her the company. "Well, I can see why you wouldn't go somewhere the dog can't go," he allowed. "I had a dog once, but not since I started riding the rails." He hadn't thought about that old yellow lab for years. Suddenly he remembered himself as a boy, a dog named Maple running with a stick, his mom calling them from the porch, apron and iced lemonade and rolled hair.

Gypsy's bark interrupted his keepsake memories; Nadine called the dog back to her side, scratched Gypsy's ears. Her smile made Spyder feel hopeful. "Yeah, a dog's a good thing to have," he admitted.

Spyder noticed that Nadine sometimes ran out of sight in a hurry. He couldn't help but recognize a sick look come over her face, she'd start swallowing over and over, then excuse herself with a quick gesture and double-step to a near corner, where sounds of retching and vomiting went on for minutes. Then she'd come back, wiping her mouth, apologizing, holding her stomach. "What the hell's wrong with you?" he asked her one day, standing in the foodline a little early.

"I've got a duodenal ulcer, sometimes it really hurts." She called the dog back from the corner where her puke dribbled under an empty stack of wooden pallets. "But it's usually ok after I throw up. Sorry about that."

After thinking it over for a couple of days, Spyder invited Nadine to his camp under the bridge. He promised to cook up some chicken soup. It was bound to calm her ulcer right down, and Gypsy could have the bones. Nadine said they'd show up around four or five o'clock.

Spyder counted the last of his change and went to the grocery store. He bought chicken backs and necks, the cheapest parts, but the best for stock as far as he was concerned. He stopped at the dumpster behind the all you can eat and picked out today's specials and an empty number ten, big as a pot. He had just enough time to build a fire, rinse the can and burn it out to remove the chemical lining. Then he creased the edges, fashioning the cooking utensil known as a gunboat, as good or better than any polymer two-quart saucepan on sale in the housewares

department at the local gourmet shop. He'd fill the gunboat with river water, boil it for awhile, throw in the chicken, boil it for another hour or so, and serve it up in a mug with rolls from the buffet, a meal fit for Valhalla. Spyder was sure she'd be impressed and grateful.

Well now what the hell, he thought as he approached the river. There must have been a hundred people frolicking up and down both shores, jumping in the water, barbecuing for godsake. Teenage girls in little pink and yellow bathing suits giggled and glanced his way. He angled toward a downed tree stump, where he could keep an eye on anyone who strayed too close to his camp while he tried to figure out what the hell was going on. Listening for clues, he slowly realized that it was some kind of holiday. Families were here to picnic and kick off the summer, normal people taking a day off to say hello and play.

All at once people began to shout and point to the bridge where a figure was climbing up the main cable stay toward the west tower. A few yards from Spyder's tree stump, a busty woman in a washed out flowery caftan was calling someone on one of those portable cell phones everybody seemed to have nowadays. She was gesturing and pointing and hollering for someone to hurry. She grabbed at a couple of chunky kids pointing and hollering by her side. Spyder saw her notice him sitting there on the log, brown greasy bag and empty can at his feet, rumpled clothes feeling dirtier by the minute, one hand on his knee and a claw caught in the act of rubbing his itching watery eye.

A few minutes later Spyder watched three sharp-creased cops pick their way down the footpath, daintily protecting the patent shine on their regulation cop shoes, headed straight for the busybody woman. With a chubby finger, she pointed first to the bridge where the boy was set to jump and then over at Spyder still sitting on the log but now munching on a roll, open bag at his feet full of raw chicken and salad and leftover dreams of an afternoon friendship with Nadine. After the boy swan-dived off the bridge and began swimming strongly to shore, the youngest cop, mirrored sunglasses failing to hide his unfortunate caterpillar eyebrows, paraded over to Spyder and demanded his name and business.

"Well, you'd best haul out, Mr. Rider," the earnest kid said, hiking his belt before he handed back Spyder's I.D. "The mothers around here are uncomfortable with their daughters nearby. We've had trouble in the past and it'd be best for you to leave." He pulled out a pad and a shiny silver-colored pen from his front pocket. Spyder watched him click it a few times, lick the tip, scribble on the pad's margin to get the ink going. "We'll write you up a twenty-four hour ticket, but my advice for you is just to leave right now."

If Spyder had a room, he could paper its walls with all the twenty-four hour tickets he'd gotten over the years. It was an easy way for local police to rid their towns of undesirables. If he left town within the day and didn't come back for six months, the ticket would be voided. He'd have to abandon his sleeping gear for the second time in a month. But it was better than sticking around and risking a defenseless accusation by one of those brazen gigglers bouncing in their skimpy suits and shrieking at the boy who was now swimming straight this way. Spyder tucked his I.D. into his pocket, checked his tobacco, picked up his grub but left the gunboat, and turned toward Maxwell Road, which would lead him north to the railyards.

As he walked past the housewife who'd called the police, he tipped the brim of his hat with his clawed hand, getting some satisfaction from her quickly averted eyes. He cut across the parking lot and strode away from the bridge, not looking back to notice a lone woman standing at the east side of the structure, shading her eyes and calling her dog away from the crowd.

From Anthropomorphism to Zoomorphism

On a promontory in a spray of surf stood a gang of cormorants, broad shouldered as John Wayne. They regarded the west. The winds did not even lift their feathers. They were still as yogis.

The surging tide in North Inian Pass combed kelp and mussels like baleen – that same rushing sound; a million little sound-snaps in a swoosh – recede – sigh – return. Waves wash up on rocky islets in this entrance to the Gulf of Alaska where a colony of sea lions doze in the midday sun; the gargantuan Steller sea lion.

We caught their scent while we were still in Mosquito Pass, heard them belching loudly, breathing all over the ocean. When we neared their neighborhood nobody was swimming, feeding, or fighting.

The dry white rock of their island was warmed by the sun, emitting heat like a warm massage towel to the large bodies sprawled all over. We idled as much as you can in that Pass and admired the biggest lion high above us on his rocky island. He had few battle scars. He was a leviathan. He was the king of this mountain. He regarded us, he of the one-ton moveable mountain of flesh that can dive to a hundred fathoms. A small movement of his black leather flipper, languid like a yawn, was all he deigned to do. He was regal as a sphinx. A phalanx of sea lions sprawled all around. Thirty-six tons of sea lion lay up on those rocks and hardly a hair moved. They dozed and the ocean surged all around.

A separate perch of seagulls squatted in silent dormancy, civilian, gazing south, asleep eyes open. Every sentient being on that island was at rest.

We bobbed around in the billowing bliss, trying to stay upwind of the sea lions' big dragon breath.

Eventually we had to go home – to the woods on a hill in a hamlet in a wrinkle of an island that begins or ends the Alexander Archipelago, depending on your voyage. It is buzzing all summer with fishermen and floatplanes, boats and travelers. I retreat to my hilltop at the end of a workday to get as much repose as possible, preferably in my all-weather hammock.

I sat out on the porch, reading, absorbing misty sun, regarding the squirrel sleeping on the tree branch with his legs hanging over the sides. He was as flopped out as a beanbag. A hummingbird, the mighty Rufous, appeared at the feeder, sipped, shuffled tail feathers and then perched on top of the feeder to sun its throat like a ping-pong hologram.

That night, perusing Thoreau's *Walden Pond* writings, a word leaped out at me: Repose. It was in curious juxtaposition to some other words. So assembled they read, "The wildest animals do not repose."

Say what? I laughed out loud. Had Thoreau had been working too hard that day, trying to convince himself? I went back to reading Annie Dillard for a while, wanted a bit of "Living Like Weasels," the "patron saint" story of repose.

Sometimes you need to be quiet to see wild critters and sometimes just being here year-round helps.

One early spring, floating on the Dundas River, Harv and I were talking, loud as happy people in the wilds, laughing, not particularly looking for wild life. Here came two wolves, one black and one gray loping down the bank. Then, noses to the earth, they made their way down

an invisible trail on that silty riverbank where they left the meandering prints of their padded paws in a graceful rhythmic wandering parabola that went on for a long time until they were finally out of our sight.

Maybe they follow that trail every day, random as it looks to me. Like an ancestral bear trail, that meanders not far from my house, frequented by the coastal brown bear, those giants of the species. They follow this path faithfully, meandering from the ridgeline at two-thousand feet, through rainforest muskeg and down the hill away from the house through hills and hollows of wild blueberries, a scarce commodity by this time after the equinox, after the sand hill cranes have flown over.

One day, I was upstairs at home when I simply got this vibe. It said plainly, BEAR, right through nine inches of cedar wall. I knew it was true because I could feel the radiating chill of my solar plexus, the proverbial hairs standing on end. I tip toed to my window. There he was, down below. Brown Bear, the Grizz.

He moved among the berry bushes, his gold tipped fur so eminently plush, the epitome of grace. The hump on his back rippled gold and chocolate.

There were noise-making seal bombs and some accoutrements of ballistic ability, if I'd wanted to scare him away, but there seemed no point in that and I didn't want him to associate my house with annoyance. It is, after all, his neighborhood. He has de facto eminent domain, and besides he looks so gorgeous in the blueberries. I watched him obliquely, not wanting to send my own vibe and cause him to look my way. After a bit of silent grazing he moved down his path of the hillside, his great head swinging and rippling colors, shoulders and haunches fluid and powerful, disappearing into the rainforest.

The next day I stepped out the front door and scanned the yard. I had my superhero eyes on and my antenna was up, alert for bear. It's extremely rare to have them so close to the house but it had been a lean berry year. I was heading to my burn barrel to get rid of paper. With each step, I stopped and scanned again, just like in the cartoons. I was thinking to myself, look carefully, you know how these bears can blend in.

My porch meets the forest with about ten feet of dirt and rock between the trees and me. This is how I like it and Harv has shown great forbearance over the years by not cutting and trimming around the house too much. I like the overgrown feeling in the rainforest, the lushness, my trees up close. A huge Sitka spruce catches the west born wind with boughs that sweep to the forest floor where its roots form steps in the hill. A kid could build a fort under those ten-foot wide branches that skirt the ground.

I step off the porch and slowly scan the area. The light through the pines is the brilliantly cool silver of the ocean under white sky. The wind is a freshening westerly billowing in from the ocean, making the cedars swoosh and the spent fireweed sway on their six foot stalks sprouting white fronds and seeds that I hope will take root in the ashy soil that they like so much. The wind parts the trees and I can see whitecaps out off George Islands.

I remember that I am looking for bear sign and I resume my resolute scanning. Step - scan, step - scan. I look again toward the ocean and there in the hollow of my hill, at the base of the big spruce, a mere three steps from me is my bear; his back to me he sits like a man in an easy chair, a blueberry bush on each side of him. A casual paw sweeps a branch of berries into his mouth. I hear the leaves as they scrape through his jowls. If he had stood up just then he would have towered eight feet tall. Brother Bear. I levitated back to the upstairs of my house

like holy smoke, heart pounding, ears ringing. I quietly read the dictionary while I let the bear be. I did not look out that window again that day. Let it be.

I love my forest home where the wildest creatures know all about repose.

Later that week Harv set about cutting and trimming around the house. The trees gave a few limbs to facilitate a better line of sight for bears in blueberry bushes. It was rather pleasant to look at the undulating hilliness, areas now combed of some brush leaving a lush carpet of moss and fern and bunchberries.

I ambled out one morning to do some more yard work, or maybe read. I sat on the porch scanning the area, inhaling my mocha, working out my plan for the day. The sun was over the mountain, lighting up dew-tipped greens and yellows of the forest floor, turning mosses brilliant velvet. There was a crow back on one of the mossy areas, flat on its belly, with wings spread on the ground. I was lamenting a dead bird when I saw a wing twitch. Then they ruffled and I saw that bird stretch itself and settle back in the sunlight with a little sneeze, and then -- repose.

He was sunbathing. I sat on the porch for a good forty-five minutes, reading a book, not wanting to startle this serene scene. I'd look up and there he'd be, blue-black wings glossy in the sunlight, lying there resting as if he'd just had a great massage. The sun warmed the porch and I took a cue from that bird. I lazed, lounged, and loved my forest home. After a bit, he ruffled his wings, stretched, stood up, sneezed, scratched his belly with his beak. He stumbled around a bit, ruffling and rolling neck feathers, stretching wings and then with a raucous "Caw-caw-caw," took up into the sunlight, wings beating, soaring out towards Brady Glacier where the ocean is the color of soft-powder-blue under the clear sky.

Thoreau had written words that I took to heart long ago: "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours." I had forgotten that he had written that. I forgive the wild-creatures-don't-repose remark.

It was a good day for airplanes and Jacques the flying ace was at the airplane float waiting for his passengers and assorted rest of us were there waiting for another plane. A sea otter floated by on his back with an outgoing tide, gazing at the sky. The sun bathed Brady Glacier and the breeze was gentle and warm, a rare occurrence in this ocean cove. Lewis was there, stretched out full on the dock, hands under head, alternately gazing at the sky and dozing in the sun -- a true artist of living.

A raven dropped a pebble in a wishing well. Susurrus of wind swept through the pines on the hillside sounding like blueberry leaves through bear's jowls. I sat on the dock, back propped up, enjoying the easy company. Jacques took a cue from Lewis and stretched himself out on the dock as well. It was a beautiful day in the neighborhood. I sat like a bear in his easy chair there absorbing the full blessing of ease in gentle company. No one spoke. It was a time for silence and rest, repose.

And there seemed then and now nothing finer to me than lying about on the airplane float in various states of repose, where the sky is the muted green of a quiet sea, the glacier flows in its frozen timeless repose and there is the caw-caw-caw overhead of a sometimes sunbathing crow. And I know it is true, to paraphrase Annie Dillard, we have "very calmly gone wild."

Bus Stop

A dull gull day, gray
low clouds swallow mountains
and wind waves rain sideways.

Once again we are fish
schooled under the eaves
silent, side-eyeing each other

destined to move on
in the same direction

for a time.

December 1, 1955

I began a breech birth
Left foot dangling outside
To sample a world, not sure
On the day Rosa Parks decided to refuse
To give up her seat to a white man
Down south in a ruptured land

Clenching my toes, tried out a chilled land
Traveling that lonely burrow away toward birth.
The years had made the doctor the right man
A dozen med students from the hall outside
My patient mother didn't mind, so didn't refuse
Their arrival to watch this master's sure

Maneuver. Put her under to be sure
Shoved my boldest limb back up into that warm land
Flipped me head to toe, though memory may refuse
To recollect exactly the evening of my birth
Nice to know that in the wide world outside
The memory twists fresh for one white man

Or maybe for more than one white man
Never seen the likes of that day, to be sure
The dozens or more watching from outside,
Eyes on one, surprisingly strong, newly rooted to the land
Turned upside-down—the wrong to right, this birth
Without a knife—the significance was hard to refuse.

Life makes its own demands that no one can refuse:
Her complete calm startled that man
Both knowing how useless to slow or rush a birth
Whose calling knows nothing so sure
As the right place and moment to land
And take that first breath on the outside:

Rosa exhaled, looking outside
That darkened bus window. She must refuse,

Granddaughter of slaves who labored this land;
Turning, she stared down that white man
Never before had she been planted so sure
Remembering the seeded fields of her grandmother's birth.

December rain outside, a seat warmed for no white man
She could plainly refuse, because she knew for sure
This was her land, held firm, cradled here at birth.

Between Tides at Twilight

The mudflats rest raw
resilient as a newborn's skin.

Footprints: sandpiper, plover,
tern, gull, crow, ours,
have their moment, then are gone.

A shore feeding oystercatcher
with furtive red alarm squawks
startled by your child-stride:

surprising as a morning moon
your steps splash
fade fast at four-and-a-half.

In and out of his element
a silver, or maybe a chum
in a shallow rivulet
on his side, waits for the turn of tide.

Too weak to finish the journey,
a pectoral fin flits, spins
aimless as a windup toy,
mouthing jaw, a mute puppet.

His skyward eye speaks.
An occasional shell open, empty.
A stranded shrimp wriggles, wreathes.

Child, you do not think about nightfall
anymore than next Wednesday.
You halt, enraptured, then swoop

to capture the struggling shrimp,
guard it as it flaps upon your palm,
deliver it to a tide pool.

Watch its contortions turn to dance.

In the same small universe,
a hermit crab retreats, disturbed
into a deeper crevice.

Then sounds the steady skirr
like a spinning rope overhead.
Our attention lifts.

The grey familiar form:
great blue heron,
crook-necked, rhythmic wings wide
rowing to smooth currents,

skirts the sky's last light
towards its perch high
on a hemlock's twisted hat.

We listen. Even the salmon
seems to pause. Water puddles
at the edges of our boots.

This place where we stand
will be taken back soon enough
yet somehow you hold tight to it,
pocket a vacant cockle,
one more barnacled stone.

Then ribbons of returning water
urge you up the shore.
The heron takes wing
into the shroud of dusk

and night, impatient,
waits among the trees.

Dementia

Clawfoot tub, water of life,
plug pulled, gugu-lug, silence.
You wonder if the water drains,
then a whirlpool flickers, forms. Yes.

Competent woman of 86 years
life of good decisions, children
reared true and proper
taxes paid, votes cast
solid investments for rainy years
for God alone knew what
lurked in the still to come.

The maw of the tiny whirlpool
wiggles in an revolving orbit,
mind empties of names and places,
even loved and familiar faces,
down the water goes, a final gulp,
leaves the body in a chilling tub.

Winter Ferry

A bearded youth with twinkling eyes
strokes the hair of his pregnant love,
stares ahead into the ever changing face
of gray sea hemmed by spruce-dark edges.
On a blanket a teenage girl sleeps,
a swirl of raven-black hair shielding
her eyes from the morning light.
An old woman reads, a child coos,
someone strums a mellow guitar.

We glide north on Chatham Strait,
clouds, fat with December snow, dip
into the sea, merge sky and water,
erase the horizon and blur all edges.
We too become more than a ship of strangers
simply going somewhere else,
now a part of the ship, the cold waters,
the hanging clouds, a harmony of parts.



Coming into Auke Bay by Tom Bornstein, UAS Student, Juneau
Photoshop

The Search for Jane Rogers

"Tell me again why you're driving out to Mississippi in the heat of the summer instead of spending more time with us," my brother asks after I fly into Atlanta from Alaska.

"Well, the short answer is I hope to find the grave of Jane Rogers, the oldest Rogers ancestor I know about."

"What kin was she? I can't remember all that stuff you mail me."

"Great-great-grandmother. Born in 1795. How about coming along with me?"

"You're going to tromp around in a bunch of snaky old graveyards I imagine."

"Probably. A little poking around in the courthouse records first, then I'll go to the cemetery there in Monroe County where Jane's supposedly buried. Come with me."

Lane shakes his head, "No, I'm not old enough yet to want to visit dead relatives," he says. At 53 he is five years younger than I.

After a hot tiresome drive to Mississippi I dive into paper records in the Chancery Court Building, a building fitting my image of a depository for old records, of papers signed by hands long lifeless. Red brick and arched entrances adorn the downtown landmark, three stories high and as solid looking as a fortress. Inside, clerks scurry about and lawyers and real estate people pore through land records. I trail a cooperative clerk down marble stairs with surfaces worn uneven with the traffic of many feet. We enter a dark basement, and it takes a minute for the clerk to find a light switch. "What you are looking for should be in one of those cabinets," she says as she waves toward the assorted filing cabinets. I had expected to have to sign an oath in my own blood to search these original records, but she never even asks my name.

The cabinets are neatly packed with bulging folders. For a genealogist used to working with bound books and microfilms, the fingering of 160 year old originals is nothing short of sacred. After a couple of hours I have found a few new leads and confirmed information I already had, including the reported location of the grave of Jane Rogers.

My second day sees me driving with the Monroe County map spread on the passenger seat beside me; the glare of the hot and unrelenting Mississippi sun slants viciously through the windshield. The highway follows a dike between walls of oaks, gums, tulip poplars, all matted with brier, grapevine, and, in spots, kudzu. Off the highway and into the thick green go two-track dirt roads, their signs speaking of swamps and floodplains; Tombigbee Bottoms, Beckham Bottoms, Black Oak Bottoms. Soon I'm on the old road to Cotton Gin Port just south of Okolona, a musical name south of equally tuneful Tupelo—at least I think that's where I am. But if I read the directions correctly the cemetery should be where the filling station up ahead sits. I pull into the station.

My question draws a blank on the face of the young lady behind the counter, and she calls to two men lounging near the bread rack. One of the men, a squat middle aged man with a florid face, has a neck that forces him to turn his entire torso when he turns his head. The other man is tall and wiry. They volley my question back and forth. "Baker Union you say?" says the squat man. "I think it's off Old 41." The tall man nods. They begin to tell me how to get there, sprinkling the directions with a lot of "go quite a ways" and "past the place where old Cunningham used to live" and such. The two can tell from my tentative nodding that I am lost already. The squat man glances at his watch. "Well, I ain't got nothing better to do than go

home and rock on the porch. I'll lead you over there."

So off we go, he in an old Buick and I right behind in my rented white Chevy. I concentrate on where we are going, knowing I will need to find my way back. We pull into a cemetery and Mr. Squat jumps from his car and inspects the nearest gravestone. Before even getting out of the Chevy I suspect this is not the right place. I have a list of gravestones in Jane's final resting place and the list is much longer than the number of graves in this little plot. But I begin to read headstones. To my surprise my guide reads alongside me. I didn't expect him to stay.

After I convince him this isn't the place, I thank him profusely for going out of his way, saying I'll check my notes and try again another day. But he's having none of such resignation. "Let's try one more place," he says. "The more I think about it the more I think I know where it might be." So off we go again.

The Buick pulls off the road into a driveway where a shirtless man bends over an upside down lawn mower. As he pounds a chisel against a rusted nut, the metallic ringing enters the car through the closed windows and over the hum of the air conditioner. The man lays down his hammer as my friend gets out of the Buick; they exchange handshakes. The shirtless man has a veritable forest of gray hair on his chest. He bends awkwardly from the waist, leaning a little to port as if some strong force has twisted him off the vertical. He shakes my hand firmly. My new friend explains what we are doing and the shirtless man smiles thinly as he tells me he didn't know my great- great grandmother personally, but that he has been bumping around these roads since 1939. "Most of my people went to Texas to fight the Mexicans and they stayed out there," he tells me, speaking as if these relatives left recently rather than 150 years ago. The two men slip into a conversation that, in spite of ears trained during my boyhood years in Georgia, I am hard pressed to understand. Neither of them talks to the other in the same cadence they use with me. They slow the cadence and smooth the corners off words; they leave a longer gap than usual between some words while pushing others closer together. But they are now convinced they know where the cemetery is. Mr. Shirtless explains, "Go down Old 41 toward where Cotton Gin Port used to be. That was the old road from Okalona. Turn south on Old Wren Road and follow it to New Wren Road. It's on the right in a grove of oaks and cedars. If you get to a big curve you done gone too far. Turn around and come back a bit." After a round of handshakes, we are off again.

Metal work displaying the word UNION arches over the cemetery gate. A brass plaque, added much later than the iron work, dedicates the cemetery to a Samuel Baker. Baker Union! I wonder why, in this hotbed of the confederacy, the countryside is peppered with cemeteries named UNION. I hear later that this relates to an 1801 Plan of Union between Presbyterians and Congregationalists. Jane's family was Presbyterian like so many of the Scotch-Irish.

Even with their drapery of Spanish moss, the oaks are no match for the sun's intensity, and the air is a steamy broth of odors, bugs, and pollens. Cicadas chorus in a frenzy, their sawing rising to a climax like the whistle of a tea kettle, rising again and again. Along the back of the cemetery a wall of kudzu rises irregularly over shrubs and trees, the tentacles of the vine snaking horizontally toward the sun, intertwining about each other in their struggle for support, the wall like a green wave threatening to break over the scatter of gravestones. The mournful call of a dove comes from a nearby tree. How appropriate, I reflect, remembering with a shiver up my

spine, that as a boy I had been told by older boys that the call of the dove was a moan from a ghost emerged from a grave.

We walk through the gate and I head for cluster of older graves in a small grove of cedars. One cedar grows so near a grave that its trunk twists the headstone out of position. My eyes settle on a tall white stone. I approach it. There she is, Jane Rogers, born 1795. Beside her is the grave of a grandson, age one year and three months. Mr. Squat wanders off reading other gravestones.

I kneel at Jane's grave tracing the lettering and date with my forefinger. Knowing her family left this place more than 100 years ago, my branch looping back to Tennessee, and other branches migrating to Texas, I wonder how long it has been since another relative, a blood kin, has visited this grave. I try to imagine Jane as a flesh and blood woman. Kneeling by the gravestone I envision the flow of young America over and around the Appalachians. I don't see them realistically like a caravan of wagons, some mule-pulled wagons with milk cows in tow, and perhaps men riding horses and mules. I see instead a stylized swarm of people over the mountains and hills not unlike a moving carpet of toy people on a canvas of our history spanning from about the signing of the Constitution to the Civil War. In that flow are my ancestors: Rogers, Allisons, Mayfields, Bickerstaffs, Davises, and Hendersons. Jane becomes more real—a person whose remains lie a few feet under ground, but a woman who once felt joy and pain, one who left few traces behind.

Then I realize that while she left few traces, I am one of them. The buzz of the cicadas builds and the sun beats down. To my surprise tears build behind my eyes.



Inlaid Tea Cups by Jette Mandl-Abramson, UAS Student, Juneau
Ceramics

The Big Melt

That competitive part of me
that requires I coach basketball
at age 67,
oil my baseball mitt each spring,
follow my teams during good
and bad years,
and mumble ungraciously
when the guy in the next skiff
catches a salmon
and my poles
remain comatose---
also requires that I exhort
the clouds for another layer
of snow.

Now, two inches beyond
the new record,
I am fulfilled.

Yet, 222 inches
having been plowed,
blown,
drifted,
shoveled,
sanded,
and blasphemed,
it is again
snowing.

What have I done?

Kingsmill Reef

July, 1983 the first flirtation.
I nip at the edges, fearful
 Of reef teeth
That bite and swallow whole.
"She'll take your leads for sure,"
John says, "but she wants more."

Even the humpbacks
 Give wide berth;
But not silver schools of salmon.
They slide into and out of ridge corners;
Do wheelies and jumps
Over pinnacle sand ledges
Like a salmon moto-cross.

Kelp islands torn loose elsewhere
 From swell there
 Dwell here.
One eye is for the reef, one for kelp; another for the boat's others, a fourth for mine.

A southeasterly wind brings swell. And on top chop, foam, froth.
"The spirit is angry today.
We haven't been feeding her
enough gear," John laughs.

I laugh too, nervous,
As my bow breaks waves
 Toward harbor's calm.
"She'll be angrier yet, I reply.
I'll not feed her today."

John and the Shelly D,
 Tougher than I
Face anger longer.
There's kings near the point
 and a reef to torment.
He'll crowd the edge a while longer.

They've seen worse together,
The Shelly and John-
Not by choice, but chance.
Machine as man, two as one
Challenge the spirit of the reef.

She fears giving up her kings;
He fears she'll want him.
 Tempter, temptress bound together
By silver treasure
 Near the other's grip

Despite Man's Best Efforts to Ruin It

Excitement filled the air as a crowd that included myself gathered to peer through the darkness over the side at the water below. Illuminated by only the aft lights of the ship, the surface of the salt water exploded as the second large cobia of the evening was being landed, making several fantastic lunges before finally being subdued. Although it would seem that it was the thrill of seeing these large and exotic bullet-shaped fish of the tuna family rip through the water that had brought our group together on the aft deck for the last several evenings, I was finally beginning to realize that this was about much more than just the fishing. Once evening was upon us, no longer visible was the smoke from the oil field fires, the lifeless beaches in the distance, the four wooden-hulled mine sweeping boats tied up alongside, or even the gray paint and missile launchers on deck behind us. With only these amazingly productive waters and a sense of camaraderie filling our consciousness, we had managed, if only for a moment, to escape the reality that we were anchored in a floating mine field in the northern Persian Gulf onboard a nuclear powered cruiser during Desert Storm.

While the natural productivity of marine life in the Persian Gulf waters has been well established, it has received much less press than events which might seem quite contradictory to that fact. As the world's busiest oil shipping lane, about 17 million barrels of oil travel by tanker daily between Oman and Iran through the Strait of Hormuz (Energy Information Administration). While the normally heavy shipping traffic has been determined to be a source of contamination to these waters, its damage is pale in comparison to the result of at least 108 recorded oil spills in the Persian Gulf with volumes greater than 10,000 gallons (NOAA). "Between 1978 and 1991, prior to the Persian Gulf War, five major oil spills had occurred in the Gulf, each involving more than a quarter of a million barrels of crude oil and each being larger than the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill" (Baumann). Despite those staggering statistics, the worst was yet to come. "The largest oil spill in history occurred from tankers, a tank field, offshore terminals, and refineries during the 1991 Persian Gulf War; it dwarfed other spills with a release of approximately 520 million gallons of oil" ("Disasters"). By the time final spill estimates were tallied, the result was more than three times the world's second largest spill and over 45 times more oil spilled than during the Exxon Valdez grounding in Prince William Sound in 1989. The resulting oil slick produced from this massive spill would stretch over 100 miles long and as much as 40 miles wide (Schmitt). While these large individual events have had a significant impact on the environment, it should be noted that the current estimates of industrial spillage and natural seepage of oil into the Persian Gulf range from 250,000 to 3 million barrels of oil per year (Baumann). These two sources alone are capable of providing the equivalent of between 1 and 12 Exxon Valdez oil spills annually. Yet "in spite of the numerous past oil spills, especially during the Iran-Iraq conflict, the natural seeping of oil, and the large number of huge oil tankers, the Gulf has remained an active and unique ecosystem and functions as a significant food source, an important recreation area, a major habitat for endangered species, and a key flyway for migratory birds" (Baumann).

We had steamed from San Diego to the waters off Kuwait as quickly as possible in

February of 1991, stopping only in the Philippines to take on additional provisions before crossing the Indian Ocean. While we had seen spinning dolphins and flying fish leaping from the waters as we approached the entrance to the Persian Gulf at the Strait of Hormuz, it was neither the marine life nor the potential for oil on the surface, but what might lie just beneath it that was the focus of our attention. The mission of our 585 foot long Virginia class nuclear cruiser, the USS Texas - CGN39, was to anchor in the northern Persian Gulf and coordinate mine sweeping operations, a duty previously performed by the USS Tripoli and USS Princeton (Doehring). In addition to intentionally instigating the largest oil spill the world had ever seen, Iraqi forces had also deployed 1,157 mines along heavy shipping routes during the Persian Gulf War ("Assessing Threats"). While that figure was not yet available to us at the onset of our mission, over 100 mines had already been located and disarmed by the time of our arrival. These mines consisted of influence mines that rest on the bottom and contact mines that were moored just below the surface, many of which had broken from their tethers and were adrift in the currents of the Persian Gulf (Cushman Jr.). Both fixed and drifting mines were in the vicinity of where we would anchor. This concern was also the catalyst for our assignment, for the reason we were replacing the USS Tripoli and USS Princeton was because on the morning of February 18th, 1991 they had both become victims of these mines within a period of three hours of each other (Toppan). For the next several months we would work with U.S. and allied forces to locate and disarm the remaining mines, many of which were manufactured in Italy and the Soviet Union. Although it would take time for the full details of the mine impacts and damage done to USS Princeton and USS Tripoli to reach our ship, once the stories of sailors in the engine room spaces aboard the USS Tripoli hitting the ceiling, falling to the floor, and hitting the ceiling again as a result of the blast repercussion began to circulate, we found that the main deck of our ship had become quite a gathering place in evenings. Apparently the inability of the sailors performing mine lookout duties to see much after dark combined with the fact that many of the living quarters onboard USS Texas were located between the fuel tanks and the missile magazines had not been overlooked by this gathering crowd. It was during one of these early gatherings, amidst the sounds of stories of back home and ports visits, a shortwave radio tuned into a Cubs game on WGN from Chicago, and someone with a guitar, that I recall the first "fish on" being heard.

The transformation of a ship from an invasive species to a point of curiosity for the surrounding marine inhabitants never seemed to take very long anywhere we stopped. After the slow and steady titration of hundreds of beautifully colored tropical fish had gathered around our recently anchored ship to check out what must be the new coral reef, our thoughts had turned to fishing after watch hours. In addition to the numerous dolphins and reports of sailfish, by the third day we had even seen an enormous whale shark slowly cruising back and forth along the side of the ship. The amount of sea life that surrounded us seemed to exceed anywhere else the crew of the USS Texas had previously anchored. All resistance to drop a line over the side was soon gone. That evening every available fishing rig that the ship had as part of the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation program was brought out, the hooks were baited with frozen shrimp and whatever else could be gathered from the galley, and the lines were dropped over the side. Although several salt water catfish were soon caught fishing just off the bottom,

the fact that “something” had hit the second or third one hard enough to break the line while it was being reeled in was almost mesmerizing to the crew. As the catching of catfish soon proved easy enough, they soon became the bait as they were reeled up off the bottom and allowed to swim around until the next big strike. Unfortunately the fishing line on the ship’s reels had proven it was again not stout enough to withstand the impact of these strikes. It would not be until after our first port visit to Dubai that we would have the opportunity to look for a heavier monofilament that would let us find out what creatures were lurking below.

There were 550 of us that made the USS Texas our home during this deployment - leaving just over one lineal foot of ship per person. Despite the number of crewmembers on board and all the surrounding activity as a result of the events of Desert Storm, I recall that most of us shared a feeling of being somewhat helplessly isolated as we drifted around our anchor in the currents. I think it was the combination of being held in one place while the eight-knot currents of the Persian Gulf were sweeping by and knowing that many of the mines already adrift would pass by us at least once. As a reactor operator, I spent my watch hours in the heat of the engineering spaces well below the water line of the ship. While engine room watch crew made every effort to direct the conversation elsewhere, thoughts of what happened to the USS Tripoli and USS Princeton were never far away. All of us were hoping that this time bad things wouldn’t happen in threes. Stress seemed to be like a fast moving virus, and before long the majority of the crew was certain that it was too hot, too crowded, and that we were too far away from anywhere any one of us wanted to call home. In hindsight however, I am glad that my attitude had soured enough to fully appreciate one of the better life-lessons I would learn in the Navy.

The seawater temperature was a constant 95 degrees and the engine rooms were a hot place to be for five hours at a time. A friend of mine and I had gone up to the main deck after our watch to find several small wooden hulled minesweepers tied alongside and went to investigate. Wood was used to minimize the chance of activating magnetic mines with the magnetic field present in metal hulled ships. On the outside of the bridge of each minesweeper were painted symbols for each of the many mines found and disarmed or destroyed. As we went on board these boats, we were greeted by a small crew in good spirits. How strange that they seemed excited about liberty on the USS Texas I thought to myself. Yet as we walked around deck of the first boat, two things immediately caught my attention. The first was just how primitive the living conditions were. These were working vessels with minimal accommodations for the crew, and both the vessels and their crews had the same look and smell. The second was the fiberglass skiff with a big outboard motor and water ski lying across the seats. This immediately brought to mind the scene from *Apocalypse Now* where Lance was water skiing behind the patrol boat as the Rolling Stones were blasting “Satisfaction”. The crew explained that they occasionally water skied for recreation when they thought they had cleared the immediate area. Jim asked if they worried about sea snakes since we had seen several swimming in the waters nearby over the last several days. We had been cautioned about them by the senior staff of the USS Texas when we arrived on station. So poisonous were they that you would only have about 10 seconds to give yourself an injection of atropine before you would succumb to their venom – or so it was said anyways. Just as the forest cannot be enjoyed until the fear of

bears is overcome, the crew had chosen to get into the game instead of to watch in fear on the sidelines. As I looked across the small deck of the minesweeper and down into the oily bilges of the open engine compartment that smelled strongly of diesel fuel, I realized that these guys were looking forward to their visit on the USS Texas because they didn't have a galley, a ship's store, or even conventional warm showers, yet they had managed to keep their sense of optimism and adventure higher than we had. They had done more with less because of their attitude, a lesson I wouldn't forget.

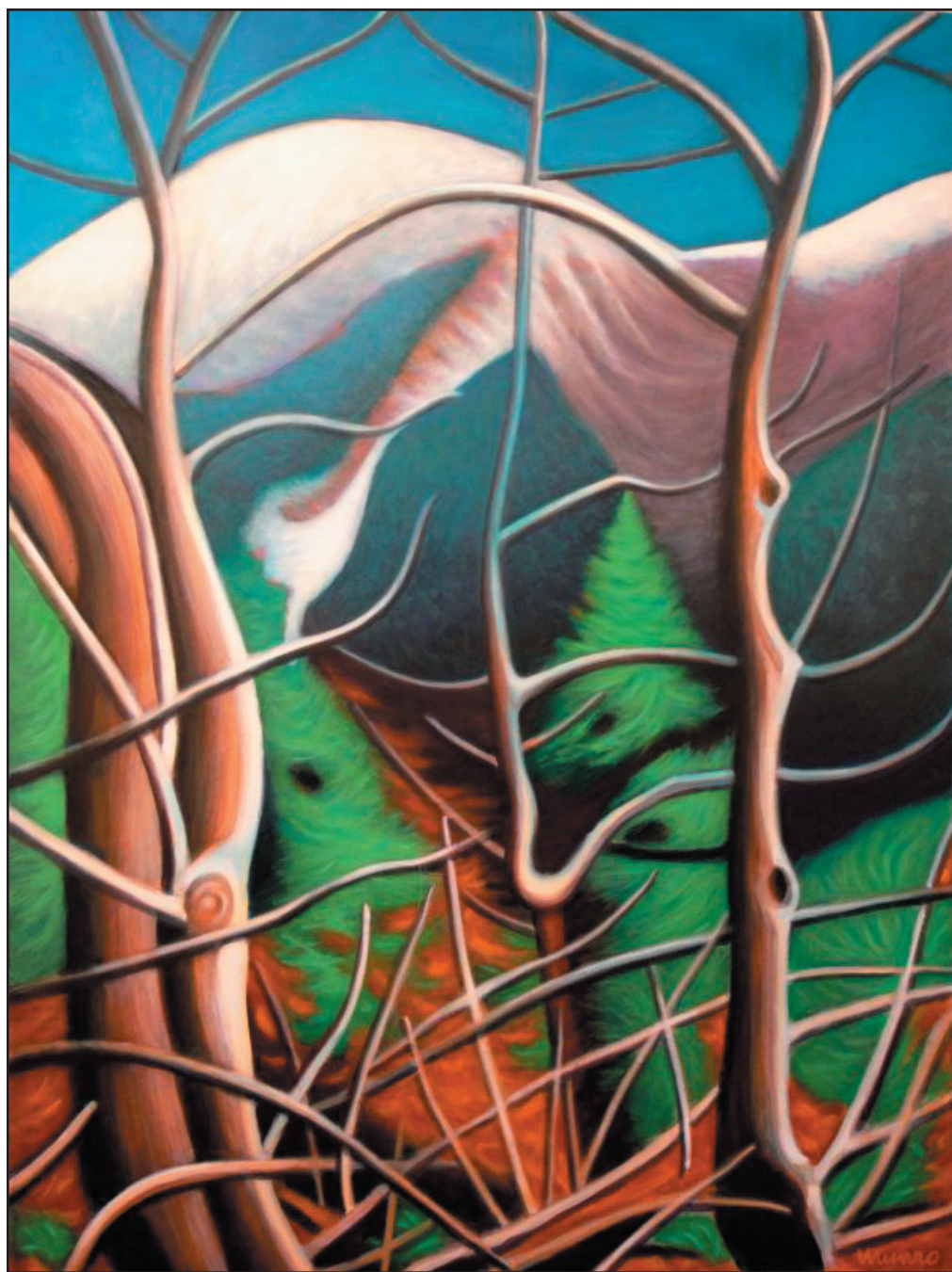
With a length of about 615 miles, a width that varies from a maximum of 210 miles to a minimum of 35 miles, and a surface area of 93,000 square miles, the Persian Gulf is relatively small in size and considered only a "marginal" sea (Persian Gulf). These dimensions combined with relatively calm waters had provided ancient sailors safe passage and helped facilitate trade between Mesopotamia and India. This had resulted in the formation of commercial trade centers along the coast, such as the city of Dilmun in the present day location of Bahrain as far back as the period of 4,000 to 2,000 BC ("Qatar"). While fishing had provided a means of subsistence in these waters for many millennia, we found that the concept of fishing for sport was either relatively new or it had minimal appeal when we searched for supplies while on liberty in Dubai, just 300 miles from the site of Dilmun where fisherman with similar enthusiasm as us may have gathered 6,000 years ago. While we were able to locate other modern "necessities" such as a Pizza Hut and Foster's Lager, the availability of modern fishing monofilament was limited to 10, 20, and 120 pound test line. Although we were anchored in only 88 feet of water, we could barely get enough of the big 120 pound test line on the small fishing reels to get our bait to the bottom. Since there was not enough extra line on the spool to be able to play the fish, all we could do was fully tighten the drag and hang on tight.

In the period of time from the close of Desert Storm to present, tourism, sport fishing, diving, and even the commercial aquaculture industries have grown markedly in the Persian Gulf, and each of these industries has a direct dependence upon its sustained productivity and well-being. It would be difficult to argue that the ability of the Persian Gulf to rejuvenate itself is nothing short of amazing. What is also amazing is the growth rate of the industries now capitalizing on it. "Gulf states are investing heavily in tourism in a move to diversify economies away from oil dependency. More than one trillion U.A.E. dirhams (\$272.30 billion) have been committed to tourism-related projects in the Gulf that are expected to be completed by 2018" (Bianchi). These projects include immense waterfront hotels, an indoor skiing complex, and even the construction of man-made islands in the shape of palm trees and a map of the world. The barren beaches we witnessed in the spring of 1991 are being converted at such an alarming rate and huge scale that it begs the most ironic of questions – will man's efforts to capitalize on the natural beauty and productivity of the Persian Gulf actually destroy the environment faster than previous accidents and military actions? The sport fishing industry, almost non-existent at the time of our visit, may be headed in this direction with a new mass-appeal for tourism. The charter industry has grown significantly, and in January 2001, Sport Fishing Magazine ranked Dubai as one of the world's top 20 destinations for sailfish ("20 Top"). Should rapidly increasing harvest efforts exceed the implementation of sufficient management practices, perhaps even these waters will not be able to keep up with venture capitalism. Not all non-petroleum industry

growth in the Persian Gulf has resulted in a diminishing of resources however. Diving tourism and marine fish farming, two industries that had a minimal existence at the time of Desert Storm, have brought international attention to the productivity of these waters to a clientele that champions its short and long-term sustainability.

With the exception of the commercial fishing industry, perhaps fish farming in particular has the most to gain from the natural marine life productivity of the Persian Gulf, and its growth rate has been impressive. During the period of 1988 – 1998, salt water aquaculture production in Saudi Arabia alone increased from 52 metric tons to 1800 metric tons (Ming-hsien). Aquaculture has also blossomed in the period since the Islamic Revolution in Iran, with production from all sources increasing from 4,935 metric tons in 1978 to more than 124,000 metric tons by 2004 (Italy). With the aquaculture industry placing itself in the sights of groups such as the American Fisheries Society and the World Aquaculture Society, perhaps production levels will continue to grow in a sustainable manner through sound management.

The fishing would continue until the day we pulled anchor and headed out once again beyond the Strait of Hormuz into the Indian Ocean. Our lines would again be dropped over the side of the USS Texas off Thailand, Hong Kong, Hawaii, and along the west coast of North, Central, and South America before she was eventually decommissioned in 1993. During my 6-year enlistment as a reactor operator in the Navy I had experienced many moments at sea that made me realize just how wonderful the world around us really was. Late at night off the coast of Peru with the stars forming the Southern Cross above, I had watched the dark seawater seemingly come to life with fluorescent green bioluminescence glowing under the moonlight as it was excited by the propeller wash. I had witnessed a sea that seemed forever asleep while underway off Ecuador in the infamous doldrums where sundogs danced and neither the air nor the water seemed to move. I had also witnessed a sea of anger when we had spent five days running through a typhoon off the coast of India and the 47 degree rolls of the ship made it easier to walk on the walls than the deck. And I had been lucky enough to experience what could only be described as paradise while weaving through the islands of Hawaii and seeing rivers running down tropical volcanic landscapes and falling hundreds of feet to the sea where humpback cows and their newborn calves swam nearby. Certainly for these experiences I am forever grateful. Of all places however, it was in the one place I would least expect that I would find myself most mesmerized by the water itself in that brief moment when we had become oblivious to everything else around us, despite man's best efforts to ruin it.



Roberts from Flume by Alan Munro, Juneau

India Scarf

He wears a beige scarf imprinted with Hindu characters, all in the darkest of blood red
I am reminded of the dirt and dust.
The heat is something I never forgot
nor the beige-ness
but somehow I misplaced the dry swirls of dust that coated my young skin
clogged my nose
choked my throat.

He wears it tightly around his slender neck
my mind drifts to those revered cows that roamed the streets dropping patty feasts for flies.
Huts formed from those same piles, smoothed with opaque river water and mud,
bits of straw thatching the sides of the dull tan dwellings.
Bare
burnt
sun-brown feet scampering alongside our taxi cabs while I sat inside
wearing just one pair of my many little girl shoes.
My long hair golden, begging to be stroked by the multitude of black-haired beauties.

Mother dressed me in ridiculous dresses,
her little princess,

left me to defend myself on playgrounds amongst my peers.

India
allowed me to wear pants and play clothes, sneakers sometimes. Running around
in the beating hot sun I chased lizards with Ben,
pulled pomegranates down from leafy green trees,
kept a vigilant lookout against snakes.

I had one Barbie doll with me; she traveled far beyond where Barbie normally would go.
Into this private place of spirituality
into His tomb
up onto Seclusion Hill
Chants penetrated her plastic ears, rhyming songs of praise and devotion
interrupted her private thoughts of Ken
and the Dream House.

A turquoise sari for mother, resplendent with golden stitches,

while daughter is made to wear a punjabi suit.
Jealous of the shine and glamour
I dragged my toes up into piles of dirt
messing up my plain cotton outfit.
A dinner out in town, chicken brought in by bicycle, its hot blood pumps one last time while
mother's sari shines.
Served to us on brass,
closed eyelids stared at me,
while mother giggled.
No waste in this place of bones and shallow skin
I ate the curried yellow rice under the spotted dots of light emanating from above us.
Boxes of metal rainbows,
bangles are selected and bought,
mine is too small when I return home to Boston the next month
Five baths and an enema later, I am allowed to play alone with left-behind dolls;
India Barbie disappears along with India clothes and India shoes.
Inserted back into the Americanized sterility,
my punjabi suit is safely stored away, next to the faded glinting sari
and any remaining whorls of dry dusted dirt.

Painted and Petrified

The first thing I did once it was all over was call my friend Henry from the parking lot of the inn. Beneath the shade of a juniper, crunching the fallen boughs under my moccasins, I recounted my wild story to him in fragmented, wild terms while he intently listened, partially disbelieving and wowing and chuckling at my folly. "And I'm looking out over it all right now," I concluded, "and it's so beautiful."

The Painted Desert Wilderness Area lies in the Northeast corner of Arizona, just outside the boundaries of the Petrified Forest National Park. I came there purely by chance, having just left Flagstaff on I-40 in the adventure of riding my bike across the country. I saw the name of the place on my road map and decided to go there; any place that is described as "painted" has to be awesome. I arrived in the evening, crossing over the highway by means of an overpass. The road into the park sort of candy-canes off I-40, heading north about three miles, then n-ing around to the west and crossing over the highway once again to disappear fourteen miles into the heart of the desert. There is a large visitor's center near the entrance gate to the park, and I stopped there to fill up my water bottles and look around. A man in a black truck with kayaks lashed to the bed lent me an allen wrench to adjust my seat and we talked about the park. He was just leaving after spending the day there, and he described some of the terrain to me. It sounded like I had come to the right place to have my mind blown.

Going through the entrance gate, I paid the five dollar entry fee and signed in. "Are you sure you have enough time?" the guard asked me. "Oh, yeah," I reassured her, not really knowing or caring what she meant; the ethos of my trip was to embrace all beauty and disregard all shit (especially most authority figures). I pedaled up the gravel incline, the road climbing gradually, switching back, and peaking over the course of a mile or so at a lookout point— my first view of the Painted Desert.

It is not difficult to discern why it's called what it is. The cliffs you can see from the lookout are streaked with salmon flesh pink, wounded red, sherbet orange, deposits of powdery white, and drips of green, brown, purple. Under the light of the setting sun, these colors were brilliant, but mixed and muddled so I couldn't tell where a streak began or ended.

I continued along the road, which traced the rounded edge of a plateau facing the wilderness area. At the apex of the curve sat the Painted Desert Inn, an orange-pink stucco structure, all geometric squares with undefined, rounded edges. The inn itself provides no accommodations; it is a museum perched on the edge of a steep slope overlooking the wilderness area below.

I rode about a half-mile further and found an adequate place to camp, off the road and over a hill to remain out of sight for the night. I lay down my newly acquired Navajo blanket, purchased from one of the many roadside gift shops along the highway, on the fine pink silt and my sleeping bag on top of it, then retraced my steps to the road and wiped my tire tracks clean with a branch. I climbed into my bag just as the sun ducked below the horizon (a flat, low horizon, as there is only plain, parched desert to the West) and began my nightly observation of the stars.

Once, hiking in the Salkantay mountain pass to Machu Picchu in Peru, I got up in the middle of the night to pee. Upon exiting my tent, my breath was snatched and my mind sent reeling at the sky's multitude of stars. I had never been to a place so void of light pollution, at such high altitude, with no clouds at all, and the effect was overwhelming. If I looked at one patch of sky, I could see the five or so individual stars it contained, but my peripheral vision from that point gave the impression of a sheer fabric of light with only small holes of empty space punched into it.

When you are suddenly engulfed by the stars, you can only stare in wonder and stagger with no sense of comprehension; the stars are incomprehensible to you. However, if you will allow yourself the time to lay on your back, just as the sun sets, and observe the developments of the sky, as I did there in the desert, you will experience the stars in a much different way.

The first star is exciting. It is faint, as there is still some light in the sky, and you do not watch it appear. Your eyes stumble upon it and you wonder "How long have you been there?" That one star seems to stand alone for quite some time, and the second almost always shows up very near the first. Now you have a pair of gleaming eyes to stare into, someone to look back, and you don't feel so alone. With the next few stars, you will connect the dots, find geometric shapes and abstract figures; it is easy to see how our constellations were conceived. For awhile, you keep count, then very suddenly the stars become innumerable. The sun is gone now, pitch black approaching, save the moonlight, and the stars begin their nightly reign of the heavens. They sprout and multiply like weeds and rabbits, and though you are not conscious of each, you are watching them all appear, one by one. In this way, by easing yourself into the darkness, the stars are no longer overwhelming; they are comprehended, understood, viewed as individual pieces to a grand exhibition rather than a jarring spectacle.

Under this familiar friend I lay, listening to music, warm and comfortable, and began drifting to sleep. Behind a meshed fog of eyelashes, I could make out the form of a hawk circling my resting place high above.

The morning came. As usual, I had coffee made by the time the sun began its daily warming of the land and I watched it rise sitting on my blanket. Sipping my coffee, I slowly consumed the contents of a plastic bag; an all-natural, organic breakfast, if slightly unfilling. I packed camp into my panniers and stowed the four bags under a small rock overhang along with my bicycle. I kept with me a small backpack with water, cigarettes, bread, and my 35 mm camera, with which I planned to document my experience.

I walked parallel to the road back to Pintado Point, a grand lookout over a huge section of the desert half a mile back toward the Inn. I perched myself on a boulder and sat looking at the distant cliff and the rolling hills that led to them. The colors of the landscape, as I have described them, were more vibrant and distinct under the sky blue sky, and I marveled again at the surreal scene before me.

I spotted, sweeping down the cliffs' face, the shadow of a cloud backlit by the sun behind me, and I watched this shadow sweep the expanse of land. Each hill it passed over began to undulate, becoming concave then convex again in a wave, as if a giant creature were writhing through the earth. With a long, protracted inhale, the shadow passed over my sitting figure and my perception was completely altered, my mind ingrained in the time and place.

Get down there, my mind told me, be a part of this.

I got up and began to walk back toward the Inn (also the entrance to the switchback trail leading down to the wilderness area), my eyes focusing and dwelling on each object in my range of vision: prickly sage brush and juniper trees, flat rock platforms molded into the sand's surface. The gravel road poked through the soles of my moccasins and my toes examined the surface of every pebble. I was reeling in a world of color, of breeze and beauty.

I heard a car.

Suddenly, the concept of people rushed back to me; people here in this place with me, people not in my state of mind. And it bothered me. I had a mission, and interference by people would only hinder my advance upon the untainted desert below. Though startled, I continued walking.

They'll just drive past you. Nothing to worry about.

The car rounded the corner and my heart skipped. A large white SUV with green decals on the sides and blue and red lights on top. Park Service Law Enforcement. Cops. I became very antsy.

Just on his morning sweep of the road, I thought, wave as he passes.

I began my friendly wave just as his lights began flashing. My heart rattled and... I was not scared, but apprehensive about the situation. I spotted the lone cop in the driver's seat radioing in his find. His eyes concealed by sporty sunglasses, his hair jet black and spiked. He stepped out of the vehicle and approached my petrified form.

"Uhhh... what are you doing here?" he asked, seemingly confused, the question making me confused along with him.

When your perception is altered, it is difficult to comprehend questions coming from people on a different plane of perception, much the same as trying to understand the rants of a deranged homeless person on the corner; it took a pause in my thinking to formulate an answer.

"I'm... walking," I told him.

"Why are you in the park right now?" his tone indicating that I was not supposed to be. Again, a pause for reflection.

"I'm just checking it out," I said.

"Yeah, the park's not even open for another two hours," he said, "how did you get in here?"

"Through the front gate."

"When?" incredulous.

"...Yesterday?" I braced for what I assumed would be a negative reaction. It was just that.

"Oh, man. You're screwed, man." Not good news. "Where did you camp?"

"Just back up the road, there?" not a question, but tentative, "Am I not allowed to do that?"

"Not without a permit you're not. Now, I'm going to have to search your person for artifacts."

"Artifacts?"

"Arrowheads, petrified wood, anything that you might have taken from the park."

While he does this, I should explain that Petrified Forest National park was not always

a desert. It used to be a living forest. Petrification of wood is the process of sediment seeping into the cells of the wood, displacing the organic material which decays and disintegrates, until you have a perfect replica of a cross-section of tree, only made of stone. A fossil. Very valuable when polished and made into bookends or paper weights. Also illegal to collect unless you are Native American. Which I am, goddammit. I did not have any petrified wood on me.

"Alright, I need to see some I.D. from you," he told me.

"I only have a passport and it's back at my camp," I responded.

"You still have a camp set up? Alright, I'm going to drive you back and we'll get your stuff. I still don't know what I'm going to do with you."

Oh, oh oh. This was not where I wanted to be nor what I wanted to be doing. The desert below still emitted its magnetic appeal upon my eyeballs and heartstrings.

I climbed in the passenger side, every bit of my being still faced the other way and decidedly disinterested in this exchange. In the car, it was no longer necessary to wear my sunglasses, white rimmed with one-way iridescent palm trees on the lenses, but I kept them on, since one look at my pupils would probably escalate the situation considerably.

We parked and walked back to where I had stashed my stuff. I rummaged through a bag and found my passport, which I handed to him, then gathered my things while he flipped through it.

"Tucker Campbell, huh? Tucker, it looks like you travel a lot. I mean, South America, Southeast Asia?"

"Yeah, I get around..." absentmindedly stuffing things into bags.

"Are you some kinda drug runner? Huh? You stuff condoms full of heroin up your butt?"

In retrospect, this is probably a tactic of intimidating your interrogation suspect that Ranger Parker picked up in cop school, most likely meant to jar the person into a quick confession. Though the subject of the question did directly relate to me at the time, I found the concept more funny than shocking and asked him if he was kidding.

"I asked you a question," not kidding.

"No, no I try to stay away from drugs," I said.

After that, I had the sense to make small talk while we drove back to the Inn (So, why did you become a park ranger?), where he wrote me a ticket for "camping outside the designated area without permit". I told him about my bicycle adventure and feigned ignorance and gratitude for his letting me off so easy. Though the Inn was filled with tourists by this point, I maintained my rationality long enough to obtain a camping permit from the front desk. I stowed the bulk of my things in the brush, adding to my day pack my sleeping bag and a few more provisions, then finally began my descent into the Painted Desert.

With each switchback in the trail, my excitement grew. I had learned at the Inn that no one else had obtained permits that day, so this place would be my own, and that put me at ease after the events of the morning. The sun was high up now, casting almost no shadows, flattening perspective and coating the land in intense and detailed light. The promised land, my Mecca for the day. Huge looming figures of smooth white stone on my either side; sentries to the gates as I reached the bottom of the trail. My body was fed straight into a meandering wash, like so

much trickling water, and I followed its curves, stopping to marvel at the milky swirling whites flowing through the feverish red silt, dry and cracked into a perfect geometry of hexagons, soccer ball patterns popping and sinking before my eyes; the cracks between the soil filled then drained of mercurious liquid. Petrified wood was scattered everywhere in huge chunks, as if the whole forest had turned to glass and a sonic boom had sent it crashing down. I picked up a piece the size of a baseball, feeling its smooth contours, and found it full of jewels, translucent emeralds and rubies, speckled with blue and white. I sat with my back to a rock and picked up a handful of silt, crushing and sifting it through my fingers. Then I was still for a very long time, blank and black. And then it was there, inside me, the deep, resonating Om of the earth, a frequency and shape and sound, and I experienced what it is to be connected to everything at once. A thing that cannot and should not be put into words; it is much more. After awhile, it was much too much and I wept at its vastness.

That night, I slept down there under the stars as jackrabbits darted from rock to rock and hawks circled the sky, and felt the most wonderful disconnect from everything in my life until that point; a new being, floating and painted, in a wild abyss.



Medicine Bag by Ruby Soboleff, UAS Student, Juneau
Moose skin with beaded flower

Merrill Field

*In Memory of Kerry and Paulette Blake
D. October 1, 2008, Anchorage Alaska*

A wheel on the top of an empty building
nicked by a falling plane
broken power lines
like ribbon at the end of a race.

A memory of a flight with Uncle Kerry
trading the headset with Jacob,
circling in the desert
then falling softly.

A charred pile of broken metal
fumed on the pavement next to mailboxes
he couldn't return to the runway
but he avoided the homes.

Pictures with Mom in the airport,
smiles in blue shirts and skies
wave good-bye,
flying south.

Only a wallet in a pothole
A fishing license, SS Card,
and three hundred dollar bills
crisp at the corners.

Two lives and a legacy
fused in flame
doused by fire engines
still burning on.

Deadly Kites

Kite Fighting

Twirling red and blue,
high above the crowded field,
Tango in the sky.

One colored paper,
a tail, a glass bottle, glue,
several yards of string.

Flowing and diving,
each Kiter in a circle
tangling the strings.

Cut a diamond shape
attach string, drag through glue and
powder of crushed glass.

Strings slicing the sky
spin to sever each other
the winner claims both.

Disregarded string,
draped from light poles to fences
resting in the breeze.

Like unseen razors,
glinting in the slow twilight,
tired from the dance.

Returning from work,
many motorcyclers
die from sagging strings.

Brazilian Ghetto

A scurry of boys
scamper barefoot to school
dodging the gunshots.

Five year old brown eyes
return from the corner store
laden with dad's beer.

An empty garden
freshly killed chicken served with rice
"Would you like a plate?"

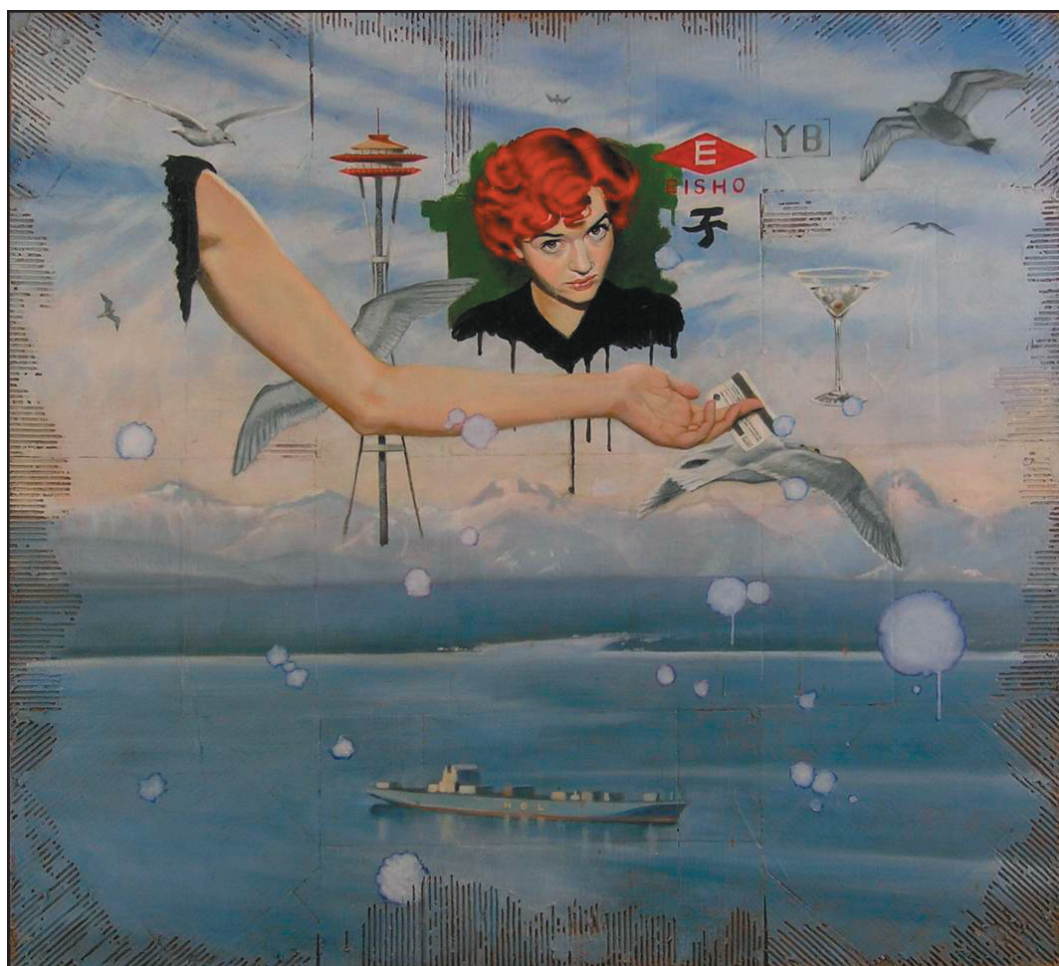
Americano
volta para sua pais*
and never come back!

Open sewer stench
mangos mixed with boys peeing
under a loaded tree.

Agua Mineral
a man on a tired bike
sells jugs of water.

Shards of colored glass
cemented on wall tops
deadly rainbow glint.

*American, go back to your country.



Seattle Riff by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on cardboard mounted on panel

The Gospel Truth of My Gay Bird

I never really thought about what it meant to actually get a tattoo. I just got it. And I was persuaded by my middle aged aunt who has a pair of cherries tattooed on top of one of her breasts. A lot of people are really freaked by the pain and permanence of a tattoo, but I just went in to DUI tattoo, asked the perky blonde Krista to sign me up (because I'm afraid of a man with a needle) and within the next few days I had a sore left shoulder, but a beautiful rainbow dove to show for my minor pain.

It was a hot sticky day in Vancouver Washington, during my first summer as a high school graduate. But I was inside of a cool building with blood red walls and checkerboard floors waiting to get my first tattoo. It was the strangest thing in the world to see the outline of my dove just sitting on my shoulder blade. Krista was able to just rub it on or rub it off, put it anywhere I wanted. But where did I want it? I had just decided this about two days ago and hadn't really thought about where exactly it should be located. She said we could move it "here" or "there" and I said "sure" to both. We both decided "there" would be best. As I stared at this colorless outline of a dove it never really occurred to me that my shoulder would never look the same again. That it would forever have this shape etched into it and that every time I would move my arm this way or that way, my dove would fly that way or this way. The idea of permanence never scared me, never really crossed my mind either. I just knew that I believed in the many things that the design stood for, so why not?

I guess I have never really sat down and thought about what a dove means to me or what it symbolizes. To be truthful I immediately think of a dove holding an olive branch and then it starts to get religious which I am totally not, so I try to venture into other areas of meaning. I like to think that the dove represents purity, maybe. Which is funny because I don't really believe in a white wedding dress or having to be pure when you're married. It's a different kind of pure. A pure that comes from an untouched pond that is totally still, maybe. Untouched by anger or hate. Untouched by fear or destruction. Pure in such a way that it brings hope, which is exactly what the dove delivered to Noah while tooling around on his ark, so maybe I am being a little religious. I don't automatically fall back onto the idea of a dove when I think of purity, but I do admire its soft white beauty and its calm cooing.

Once during an interview I was asked, "If you could have any superpower in the world, what would it be?" I immediately answered that I would fly. My interviewer asked, "You mean fly like a superhero or have wings?"

"I would have wings."

"Good answer."

To have wings, for me, would be to have complete and total freedom. I dream of just soaring and feeling everything while feeling nothing. I think the nothingness is what intrigues me. The higher you go into the sky the more everything falls away and you are simply up in ever expanding blue with possible clouds. Clouds that I imagine lying on whenever I fly by them on an airplane. I envy birds and their flight because it seems so relaxing, so weightless and effortless. I envy ravens most of all because they have discovered how to have fun with their wings. Diving and swooping

through the wind currents just because they can. Forever suspended. I have never been good at swimming or floating and when I walk or run I feel my weight come into heavy contact with the ground. To have wings stretch out of my shoulder blades and push me into the air would be my only way to find the weightlessness I desire. To be free of my fears and my pains. To keep my thoughts from drowning me. But so far I have only been able to attach the idea of wings onto my shoulder blades, in hopes of one day using them for flight.

I always kind of thought that getting my first tattoo on my shoulder blade would be sort of clichéd or stereotypical. Maybe not. A lot of girls get ones on their lower back or neck but I felt like somewhat of a sheep for choosing a shoulder blade. So why did I choose to put it there? It was sort of the same story as when I actually got the tattoo, I didn't really think about it and just sort of shrugged and said "Sure, why not the shoulder blade?" I have discovered since then that the shoulder blade is one of the least painful areas to get a tattoo and I was definitely afraid of its possible level of pain. Perhaps I convinced myself that it would be the least painful spot, go out in pain free style instead of in tears. Because I worry like a mom like that. I still don't really know why I chose the shoulder blade; I chose the other one for another one of my tattoos and I find myself constantly reaching back and touching my shoulder blades. More or less looking for unruly acne, but also to brush my fingertips across the oddly smooth and unpeachfuzzed portions of skin.

Once upon a time I wanted to be a dermatologist, but I think all along I knew that I hate skin. But I love it too. I guess I hate my skin because it decided to take on hereditary features like acne. And lots of it. But just about anyone else's skin is beyond amazing to me. I like to stare at it, touch it, rub it, pick at it, pinch it, scrape it and when I feel ballsy, photograph it. Skin is beyond amazing not only because of its wondrous talents of being full of water and keeping all of our parts inside one general area, but also because of all the different types of skin: the smooth, the bumpy, the stretched, the saggy, the scaly, the scabby, the hairy or follicley, the dark chocolate, the porcelain and one of my favorites, the lightly toasted. I touch myself a lot. Sounds awkward, but it's true. I touch my hairy legs and my acned back and I cannot keep myself from touching the ridiculous moles that grow and sprout along the strange contours of my body. It's a bizarre sensation to go from hairy, to stretchmarked, to peachfuzzed, to inked. The feeling of being inked is odd because it's almost your original skin but not quite. It moves with your skin and rises when your veins run hot, but it feels just different enough to notice when your hand leaves skin and meets ink.

To really admit to myself that the ink on my body is indeed skin deep is sort of difficult. I've always been taught that you probably shouldn't put anything on or into your body that cannot be taken out or off, so in a way it seems kind of "dangerous" to have this substance between layers of my flesh. But once again, I haven't really thought about it that much. But the ink is what is so enticing to those addicted to tattoos; at least that's what I think. As just simple human beings, mammals really, we are naturally attracted to bright things, just like birds who decorate their nests. We see the shiny and the bright and we go to it. Even if it's a gum wrapper on the ground, we make sure it isn't something more valuable or interesting. Tattoo ink has definitely grown from the days that youth, like my uncle, would take a sewing needle and stick pen ink on the end of it and poke peace signs into their forearms. The colors are just as

numerous as they are in reality and you can create any kind of concoction in the world.

I chose the basic spectrum of ROYGBV (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet) to colorfy my dove, partially because I am just a mammal and do find the bright colors of the rainbow beautiful. But also to color in parts of my beliefs. The rainbow to me signifies unity, equality, and of course to be proud of being gay, gay, gay; GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) and the more recently added Q for "questioning" and I for "intersexed." The rainbow means peace and I like many others, who pray to gods with seven arms or big white beards, hope to someday see such a thing like peace. Peace among countries, peace among people, peace among life. The rainbow is happiness which is something I continue to strive for continuously and I frequently find myself just out of its reach. The rainbow means that there is sun somewhere close by and I need it now. The color of my dove is so many things and so much of me and now it is officially and physically a part of me. And to get inside that part of me is only possible from the help of dreadful and painful steel sticks inside of a gun.

The needle is not my friend. It never has been and it never will be because all it delivers is nervousness and pain. I was always a "brave little girl" when I would get shots and have my blood drawn, because I wouldn't make a sound and I would squeeze my fist so tight that I had permanent nail marks on my palm. The nurses were always prepared to hold me down by force in case I squirmed, but I just turned my head away and hoped to some greater power that I would die or faint so that I wouldn't know that they were sticking this giant steel rod into my little arm. During my tattoo tutorial given by Krista she explained to me that the outline of my tattoo would be done by a collection of five needles, but the coloring in would be done with a collection of eight. They are required to tell you this as a part of "tattoo law," as well as cover everything in plastic and show you that each piece of equipment has not passed its expiration date, because apparently needles have expiration dates. It was great and dandy to know that I wasn't going to be shot up with Hepatitis B, but I couldn't get the picture of eight needles out of my mind, pulsating out of a foreign looking object known as a "gun", all eight needles piercing my little skin cells at the same time with flecks of orange, purple and green attached. It was one of my sweatiest palm moments to sit in that chair and wait for the needle, which I could clearly hear at this point, to jab my skin for the first time. "Are you ready?" she asked, and I nodded. I heard the needles getting closer and closer and I felt my back tighten and there it was. Contact. And it was kind of like a scary woman scratching my back with her long pink lacquered fingernails. Uncomfortable, but nothing like a nurse stabbing a needle into your little vein then giving you a dinosaur sticker as a pick me up. I owe it to the needle for not being dysfunctional in its work, I owe it to Krista for being certified and knowing how to use the needle and I owe it to the random place that sterilizes and packages those needles.

I discovered that I only really thought about what my tattoo meant until after I got it. Tattoos come with the territory of being a part of my generation and so it felt like something that I needed to do. Not to be a sheep, but because it is a way that "we" have chosen to express ourselves. And as a person who very rarely expresses herself verbally, I needed an outlet. Without the needle there is no ink, without the ink there is no color, without the color there is no dove, without the dove there is no tattoo and without the tattoo there is no outlet for my personal expression.

Signing the Divorce Papers

Playing with the pile of spilt sugar on the table,
mind distracted from the task at hand.
The granules so small, yet they still cloud
my thoughts, and keep my eyes
fixed. Focusing on the white beach
in my kitchen keeps me safe.

My mind is playing it safe.
My desires are brushed under the table.
Visions of lighthouses and sandy beaches
have shattered as a glass sliding from a soapy hand.
Your face, like that puff of air to the eye
when the doctor checks the pressure. Clouds

cover my sky like soap scum. Devotion clouded
by you no longer wanting to keep me safe.
Focusing on the sugar, since my desperate eyes
mean nothing. You're confused. Can't use a table
or a chart to find a solution. Your weak hands
try to comfort, but your touch like a beached

whale. Only there because the beach
is where it happened to land. Clouded
memories reach out trying to steady my hand.
Only within these tired thoughts can I find safety.
My only relief coming from a single circling finger on a table.
Perhaps a better use of sugar, sprinkled into my eyes

to give a better reason for tears. These eyes
will not well over lost beaches
or the piles that have been swept under the table.
I will find my peace in spite of the clouds,
and when I slide home and I am called safe
I will know it was at the work of my own hands.

Desires return, to feel the melting snow in my hands,
to have skylines and landscapes unending before my eyes.
The fear of venturing, beyond the safety
of what I know has been set on a beach
in the paths of waves that roll in like the clouds
and treat everything in their path like crumbs brushed off a table.

Holding my own my hands, I stare straight into your eyes.
The beaches are dead, your passion clouded over.
No more safety here. I swiftly brush the sugar away.



Red Shades by Rob Korpela, Juneau
Photoshop/Coral Painter X

Holey Cow

The jeers rang out like Bartman had just turned a should-have-been inning ending out into a series losing homerun. The fellow's name was Billy Sianis. He sat midway down the first base line where he bathed in the October sun and enjoyed the rare privilege of attending a Chicago Cubs World Series game. He was treated like a Cubs fan at Sox Park. An Old Style beer can hit him in the back of the head. Words like "freak," "idiot," and a few less hospitable cries were directed at him like Zombrano fastballs at an opposing batter. Grilled onions rained down on him as someone hurled a Maxwell Street Polish. Finally a few employees came over and told him that he and his billy goat were no longer welcome at Wrigley Field. He angrily cursed the fans and their team. The confused and tarnished legacy that he left behind has perplexed fans for decades and is, in some respects, the farthest reaching ungulation protest in the history of Chicago. Not that others didn't try.

Any local resident will tell you that Chicago is "the greatest city in the world." Nowhere else does the word "beef" have the delicious implication of an au jus soaked Italian beef sandwich. There are symbols all around the city like Navy Pier, Millennium Park and the Sears Tower that residents will use to support their claim. But the monument that means the most to the history of Chicago, the Union Stock Yard Gate, seldom makes it into itineraries for city tours. Out of sight, out of mind. But it is hard, if not impossible, to imagine what Chicago was like without the stock yards. They were built in 1848. Before that, cattle roamed freely over uninhabited land. The sycamore and maple trees provided shelter from the hot summer days. There were no fences. There was no gate. Then on a fateful 19th Century morning voices were heard. Men began shouting and the tools began clanging. Things were never the same for the cattle after.

When the clanging ceased, one could peer down the railroads it left behind and see any major city in the United States. They were all connected to Chicago. As cow after cow wandered in front of bullet-like speeding trains, we were reminded of our superiority. Gates and fences were constructed to protect the feeble minded creatures. It was not that the human population disliked the taste of train-smashed flesh, it is inhumane to let stupid or suicidal cattle decide their own fates. The gates were constructed out of compassion for the cows.

As the transportation industry boomed, the established eastern aristocracy and the rugged western frontiersman were linked only by Chicago. They both desired Illinoisan meat. Thousands of new inhabitants came to the city, eager to toil for long hours at the stock yards. The cows were penned up and manufactured to produce the most economically favorable results. They were ill-equipped to oppose. The sycamores and maples that the cattle used to rely on for noonday shade were replaced by buildings and chain-link fences. But do not feel bad for them; the sun was obscured by a heavy cloud of manufacturing smoke, so they really were not so hot. They began to be engineered like rayon. They tried to protest.

In 1871, a cow owned by Patrick and Catherine O'Leary staged the city's first ungulation protest. Angered by the quartering and slaughtering of her compatriots, she kicked a lantern in the barn she was resigned to. She seemed to work in concert with other natural forces.

The city was laden with wood, from humans' overuse of wood for burning, and the city had been experiencing a drought for a few days. The masses of dry wood caught fire. A wind swept in from the southwest and spread the flames across the city, waking residents from their October slumbers. The efforts of the firefighters proved useless. The panic stricken locals were forced to gather what small amounts of personal items they could take with them and abandon their homes. They gathered in Lincoln Park and watched their houses, businesses, churches, friends and family burn. The fire reduced over a third of the city – including all of the central business district and downtown – to rubble. It did more damage than Napoleon's siege at Moscow. It was a great ungulation victory.

Although that daring bovine won a great battle, the war had only just begun. The flames were distinguished at the base of the famous Chicago Water Tower, and the inhabitants vowed to rebuild a city around it. The inhabitants banded together against the protest the way that they would against Billy Sianis some eighty years later. Ruins were bulldozed and replaced with buildings, warehouses, steakhouses, sculptures, and fire stations. The new buildings built around the stock yards were proclaimed "fire proof." The city realized that it needed to grow economically to pay for the damage. They focused on the meatpacking industry.

The single greatest invention in Chicago's illustrious history followed the burning of the first city, when the stock yards began employing refrigerated railroad cars. The new cars proved invaluable for preserving the quality of the meat for the long train rides to Los Angeles and New York and everywhere in between. The demand rose markedly. It turned out that people enjoyed unspoiled meat. Another wave of immigrants came to work in the yards and made Chicago famous as "the hog butcher for the world."

40 years later another bovine spoke up. It was being dragged through football fields of cattle pens when it began to make a fuss. It was shut up by force. On the way to the Warehouse 7, it gazed into the large and longing eyes of kin who waited like victims at Auschwitz, and knew that something had to be done. It was 4 am and the workers were tired. They stood around talking while it waited in line. It recalled the heroic actions of the O'Leary cow and decided to take a stand. 21 firefighters were killed in the ensuing carnage.

Again, though, the city of Chicago bounced back, rebuilding the Union Stock Yards, and running them at a higher capacity than ever before. A monument now trivializes the cow's attempt, marking the place as a place of firefighter – rather than bovine – heroism.

A few important Chicago landmarks were founded in wake of this destruction. Not the least of which is the world famous Billy Goat Tavern which was founded in the 1930's by Billy Sianis. You might know it from the famous Saturday Night Live skits as the restaurant where the menu is, "Cheezborger, Cheezborger, Cheezborger, No Pepsi. Coke." It is perhaps here that Billy Sianis returned to after being kicked out of the Cubs game. He may have been unwilling to put up with injustice to his goat, but he was more than willing to chow down on some Chicago raised grilled cow.

Considering the importance of cattle to Chicago's history, it is of little surprise that its residents have always so been fascinated with them. The Chicago-born writer who immortalized the events at Pamplona, and could hardly keep himself out of the bull fighting ring, may very well have been shaped subconsciously by the relationship that every Chicagoan

inherently has with the cows. This relationship is memorialized in Chinatown, where thousands of residents pass a life-sized bronze statue of a raging bull every day. Although cow is grilled and consumed on the inside, the outside of Harry Caray's Steakhouse is adorned with another giant bovine memorial, complete with holes. People have even learned to adore the identity-shaping history that resulted from interaction with the cattle. Thousands crowd the United Center every Chicago Bulls home game, and Benny the Bull is a legitimate celebrity in town. But he is not a real bull.

The real animals were left to far less glamorous fates. The Union Stock Yards continued to operate well into the 1970's, and the few animals who were allowed to remain in the city were relocated to zoos at Brookfield and Lincoln Park. The protests also diminished as time passed. The cattle were degraded and manufactured, shot with steroids and experimental drugs, and stripped of the will to fight. A few humans tried to pick up the slack, but it became clear that any real compassion was lacking; the people were not being harmed, and they could not employ the radical means of their bovine predecessors.

There is only one remaining vestige of ungulation presence in Chicago, and it is felt every October. People return from long days of work in warehouses to a scene straight out of *The Wasteland*, "The winter evening settles down with smell of steaks in passageways. Six o'clock. The burnt out ends of smoky days." The lamps are lighted, and millions of viewers turn to WGN to see how the Cubs will fare. Every year for the last century the fans have been let down, and the city has been reminded of the curse that it is unable to shed.

Once, fans took a goat to Houston and tried to pawn the curse off on their NL rivals. Another time, a disappointed fan slaughtered a billy goat and hanged it from the Harry Caray statue just outside of Wrigley Field. To lift the curse, however, it is said that the Chicago Cubs organization and its fans must show a genuine fondness of and appreciation for billy goats. Mere publicity stunts will not suffice. It seems a small price to pay after all of the hardships that the billy goat's relatives have suffered in the city, but those same actions – the slaughters at the stockyards – make the Cub's future seem pretty bleak. There is simply no place for animals in a city. The larger Chicago grew, the more apparent that became, and the less likely Cub's victory seemed. Now, with a metropolitan area of nearly twelve million people, it seems that it will take more than a baseball game for the ungulates to gain any respect in Chicago.

Untitled

Every experience is a paradox in that it means to be absolute, and yet is relative; in that it somehow always goes beyond itself and yet never escapes itself.

- T.S. Eliot -

I sit on the top of a ridge – the yellow and red mountains of “Polychrome” to my left, the pure and coniferous Denali to my right, and I find myself caught in between. As I look down the path I hiked to get here, I see a half dozen others heading back, lacking fitness or desire to follow the full length of the trail, and below them, I see the Eielson Visitor’s Center. From here, the people below may look like ants, but I can clearly make out their anthill. It is a place to rest after a long bus ride – to take a load off your feet and get another cup of coffee. From it extends this maintained trail, a 2.5 mile path populated mostly by arctic squirrels looking for food scraps from wasteful or careless tourists. One such squirrel came to my feet and sat, like a dog begging for food from the table. I stopped, took out my phone, and snapped a picture. He stayed posed on his hind legs the whole time, and after I left, he scampered down the trail where lunch is more likely to be found. The higher I climbed, the fewer tourists and squirrels surrounded, and, in some comfortable capacity, I assumed my place in nature.

Upon reaching the summit, a golden eagle flew over my head, as if to welcome me. The sun reflected off of the mountain peak, making all those legends of Mt. Olympus all the more real. I glanced at the earth beneath my feet and recalled a scene from *Breaking Away*, where Cyril says, “Stop! It was somewhere along here that I lost all interest in life. Aha! It was right here.” I have thought many times since I first saw that movie about the effects that a single spot can have on a person’s life. Our lives are comprised of certain places at certain times, and it takes only one combination of place and time to redefine all the others before and after it. Looking around me now, a feeling completely opposite of Cyril’s is impossible to escape.

Below, a green bus arrives at the visitor’s center. The green busses are the economy class of park transportation. They carry a combination of adventurers, travelers, and tourists – many unload for the coffee and heat, a few head up the trail that I overlook, and others stay on the bus to head all the way to Wonder Lake at the base of Mt. McKinley. As they arrive, I observe a beige bus (the business class) preparing for departure. Tourists gather their cameras, jackets and coffee cups and take to their leather upholstered seats; all that is left for them to do is to sit back, relax, and enjoy the warm meal they paid for, while keeping an attentive eye out the window. The trip back to the park entrance takes 3.5 hours. As I watch them depart, I wonder how long it took the Athabaskans who named the mountain to travel that same path. “Over a day,” I conclude – somewhere around 10 times as long as it takes these casual visitors. On the way back, invariably there will be some thrill for the guests – a grizzly bear, or a moose, a caribou, dall sheep, or wolf will be visible from the bus. Its likeness will be captured forever on the visitor’s camera and serve as an iconic image for their trip. It is the picture that they came here for. It will make their friends and family gasp while they recount their bus ride at Denali – of course, they’ll call it a “journey.”

Sitting on the peak I take out my cell phone. Engaging the camera application, I point it at the ground. My journey is not about dall sheep or grizzly bears – it is about this spot. I lie

down to rest upon my backpack; an unobstructed Mt. McKinley directly in front of me, and I resolve to make this the place I will tell stories of. I stay here for 2 hours. Thinking of nothing at all, I just absorb what is around me; engraining in my mind a far more detailed image than the one on my camera phone. I will never return to this place and time again, so I take it with me.

The next day, I am on a train heading back to Anchorage. The surrounding scenery is beautiful. We see moose and swans and beaver dams and rivers and waterfalls on the way, and the whole way, Denali graces us with its presence. The attendants announce each time the mountain is visible with no trees or houses blocking the view. When they do, the left side of the train is vacated as everyone crowds around the windows on the right, anxious to see the mountain again. The train ride takes 7 hours. By the end, no one leaves their seats; I don't even lift my head from my book. The mountain has been present for the entirety of my trip. It has become the Sears Tower and I am in Chicago; it is a marvel towering over everything else, but a familiar marvel that warrants no extra attention.

On the ride, these towering constructions drift to the back of my mind, while the train itself rises to the forefront. I find myself constantly most absorbed with what is nearest and newest to me – my impressions always shaped by the images behind it. The train was built over a twenty year period; Warren G. Harding drove in the golden spike in 1923 to commemorate its completion. It was his last official presidential act. The railroad is over 500 miles long, and uses the standard track width of 4 feet and 8 ½ inches. In terms of square miles, the railroad is larger than Delaware. “What an absurd idea,” I thought. “If someone were to bulldoze all of freaking Delaware, and lay down steel tracks in a spiral shape that covered the whole state, people would shit themselves!” Almost immediately, however, I realized the flaw in this logic; a spiral track doesn't lead anywhere; certainly not to my spot.

It is hard to imagine being commissioned to bulldoze this landscape; the first worker ant charged with piercing the earth. I imagine that I am the one who surveys the land, and burrows a 4'8 ½" hole through it, decimating scenery that belongs on postcards. I wince as the first tree falls, but in that wince, flash images of my family. They're eating well, they're provided for; they're happy. Thinking of them is what gets me through the second and third and fourth tree falling. What choice did I have? As the sixth and seventh fall, however, I start to become familiar with the sound of trees falling. I become increasingly less bothered as the wood chips fly. Men in my group start joking and laughing. I am reminded that it's nothing personal, just business.

Snapping back to consciousness, I think about my place in the world. People generally call me a traveler – not a tourist, not an adventurer – a traveler. This concept is, in itself, relatively new. I doubt that many Athabaskans had the luxury of traveling across Western Europe because they thought it'd be “cool.” Such a lifestyle has only been made possible through our increasingly advanced technology, which has, in turn, made the lifestyle a question of ethics. After all, it is to satisfy me that the worker cuts down those trees. I am the one who used 250 watts of energy to look up how much fuel is used every time I fly – 3,378 gallons per hour. When I return home, I will call my friends and family on Skype to tell them about my spot – another 250 watts per conversation. I greedily use an immeasurable amount of resources every time I travel – all in the name of gaining a new vantage point on life.

Considering these issues always draws me back to the same question, “is it worth it?” In answer, Polychrome and Denali again rise to the forefront of my mind. Sitting on my ledge,



Series of Cedar Baskets by Ruby Soboleff, UAS Student, Juneau
Cedar bark

thinking of nothing, allowed me a lifetime of reflection and rumination on that place. Every place I've ever been – Denali, Chicago, Europe, and all of the places in between offer me distinct perspectives and cell phone pictures. In each one of these images, the same answer is suggested, “yes.”

After so much travel, the question I hate most is “what place do you like the best?” Sometimes I think of the first trip I took up I-55 when I saw the Sears Tower looming over the incredible Chicago skyline. Other times I think of my spot at Denali. Since it is impossible to compare the two directly, I respond, “Does it matter?” I don't think it does. I don't travel so that I can egotistically judge different places in terms of myself – I travel to learn. When I consider the aura of the lights of Chicago reflecting on Lake Michigan, I find myself doubting everything I ever read in *The Waste Land*. When I talk to those adventurers who make it all the way to Wonder Lake, I think of how terrible it is that our anthills blemish the landscape so. Where I sit now, on this train ride, both impressions are equal. And when I arrive, this train ride will join them, identical in rank.

I worry about those who never leave the bus, and those who spend their whole trip at the base of the mountain. The neglect of the street that T.S. Eliot talks about occurs when we fail to consider the world from different perspectives. We get so wrapped up in a single image that we start to neglect other's lives and perspectives, other places and times, and other “infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing[s].” Whether in the city or in the relative wild, if you're there too long, you end up losing a grasp of the other. The sound of wood chips falling becomes a little less painful with every passing hour. Every person, every place, every plant and animal, and every viewpoint is only a combination of certain places at certain times – if you spend too much time in

a single one, if you regard one as “the best,” you lose the lessons of the others.

But that’s just the way we are. In western society, we define everything in terms of ourselves. As Michael Pollen points out, this is even evidenced in our grammar, “I choose the plants, I pull the weeds, I harvest the crops. We divide the world into subjects and objects... in nature... we humans are the subjects.” Even here, more removed from society than I’ve ever been, this arrogance is as apparent as anywhere else. Officially, the big mountain that lies before me is not known as Denali, the name the Athabascans gave it that means “big mountain.” Instead, we call it Mt. McKinley – as if it belonged to that former Ohio Senator and presidential nominee who had never been to Alaska, much less the mountain when it became his. The place to my left is named “Polychrome” – a Greek phrase, meaning “many colors.” The last great conquest of Alexander the great, I suppose. I wonder what he would have thought had he ever seen it. How different this place must be from the shores of Alexandria – perhaps I’ll travel there next to find out.

So is this lifestyle moral? Is it greedy? I answer yes to both questions. Of course it’s greedy. Humans are inherently avaricious. Such was the case with Adam when he ate the forbidden fruit. It was so when Alexander the Great claimed ownership of Europe and Asia. And what was Columbus sailing for if not greed? How else can you explain the fact that Amerigo Vespucci received this country as a gift? I was no less selfish when I ignored the eagle and declared that spot as mine.

The worker ant only builds and expands railroads and cities out of thoughts of prosperity, and if it in any way benefits my life, I am more than willing to be the queen giving the orders. It’s the way things have always been, and will continue to be. Luckily, greed and morality don’t necessarily contradict. Although I travel out of self-interest, in doing so I feed the workers and the engineers and the software designers, and I feed their families. The more vantage points I gain on life, the more I understand that it is possible to live my lifestyle in a moral way; in fact I believe that my lifestyle engenders morality. Through the understanding and empathy that come from an intimate relationship – from sharing a time and a place – with the things that my decisions affect, I have come to understand that my flaws can be managed.

I have certainly witnessed “muddy feet that press to early coffee stands.” But if everyone experienced the desolated landscapes we endanger every day, I doubt we would use so many paper or plastic cups. When I finish my coffee, I throw it in a trash can instead of on the ground out of compassion for the street. Out of respect for the environment, I recycle it. And after seeing the unique majesty of land that I put in jeopardy each morning, maybe I’ll start carrying a thermos. It is the same greedy lifestyle that causes destruction of the land that provokes me to want to preserve it.

There is an incredible and growing infrastructure that makes travel possible, and I’d imagine that before too long, more people will find peaks to ascend. Hopefully when they do, either the intricate anthills there, or the lack of, will inspire them to change their actions too. For now, it is my duty to live my lifestyle in as ethical a way as possible, not to reject it on moral grounds. As Michael Pollen would say, the experience that each place grants me is its defense mechanism – it is experience with it that makes me want to preserve it. Hopefully, if I do, somebody else will visit, and who knows? Maybe that spot will redefine their life the way that each and every one does mine.

A Conversation With Ranunculus

Good grief, the snow has only just melted.
And here you are, the nerve.

Tulip curls peek out like bugles,
even the skunk cabbage is only now
crowning from a floor of dead leaves,
tentative yellow spikes.

But you, Ranunculus,
you and your runners, insidious
as always, you've already
staked your claim, spread the mat,
while the rest of us are just waking.
Your gang knows how to take
over the neighborhood—
and grudgingly
I respect you for that.

Maybe in a parallel universe
you are revered, your roots
the stuff of constellations.
But in mine—it's yank, pull, toss.
The stuff of four letter words.

I can't help but wonder
what Thich Nhat Hahn would do,
teacher of compassion.
Certainly not my call to arms—
twist and rip, take on the advancing legions,
reclaim soil from the infectious agent.

I think that he might sing to you
and take the spade from my desperate hands
stop the digging.

Fingers grow stiff in this cold April earth.
Air chilled too, but oh the light,
the light has returned,
returned to my bent spine
to give me that much more time, sigh,
to pull the buttercups.

Deconstruction

December twenty-third, mall thick with shoppers.
I emerge from the bookstore to red and green
ceiling wreaths, a suspended reindeer and sleigh.

And the mouths of whales.

Stacks of long black stalks,
ambassadors from the Beaufort
dark towers twice my height
shine beneath the fluorescence.
Strands along one edge droop like a hemlock.

A bright placard advertises BALEEN
and a cheerful woman makes sales.

A teenage boy asks How does it fit in their mouth?
while a man hefts one in his hand.
This a stalk of bamboo? Feels like plastic.
Another buyer chooses among three—
crack here, rough edge there, which one perfect.
My wife has always wanted one of these,
she's going to love this.

The length reads one hundred and six inches,
the price two hundred and seventy five.

Bowhead, how did we come to this—
mouthparts scratched with date and zipcode,
money changing hands in the mall?
Do your customers let their imagination drift
to the twinned blowhole, twenty-five foot fluke,
belly heaving with zooplankton?

I'm not one to deny the hunt—
tradition, history, dignity,
the nourishment of your body
sustaining a village through
deep winter into light.

But here in this low-slung mall
with its snowflake cutouts
and carols piped through the vents,
something feels amiss.

Amiss when marbled Arctic blades
are handed out like party favors
to hang over a fireplace,
when a whale is dismantled for Christmas.

We don't know the mouthfuls you swallowed,
laboring with massive tongue,
nor how the baleen shuddered
as you took the sea into your body.

We don't know the weather that day,
nor the silence that accompanied your passing.
We don't even know the name
of the whaling captain.

We can't hear the ceremony, the singing—
bone, muscle, blood, snow.

Forgive us for trying to buy you back.



Sandy Beach by Kelli K. Burkinshaw, Juneau
Photography

Threshold¹

Decades of this place piled in me and yet
never the bodies of salmon in blackness.
Through the spread of hemlock,
under damp hearts of alder leaves,
I hear the slices and surges of effort,
heavy with purpose, pulling the sea in behind.
The thrash of fins draws me down into mud.

All of me wants to fall to my stomach,
slither through twisted roots of spruce,
enter the swollen flow,
glide into that place of muscled salmon path.

I want to divide currents head-on,
split water by tail,
find the birth-curve of gravel.
I want to feel it all—
the jaw ache of melted mountain oxygen
against the memory of salt water,
the tenacity of cells unfed,
the inextinguishable need,
consuming more than my ragged body,
to spill open and deposit.

And now the question—
would I know I was dying?
Would it flutter under the scales and over the gills, the knowing?
Would it come to the embryo or later in the tides,
would it gather at the mouth of the creek,
whisper in the swirl of eddies,
urge passage in the threads between boulders
until the body twists, and finally the soft stream of eggs,
the clouds of milt, finally, maybe, the knowing.

Perhaps peace is this: the body hanging in tatters
after dancing in water, dedicated to an end,
having carried a life to sea and back.
Or this: the shiver of cells
anticipating forest, bear, huckleberry,
belonging again
to a creek where the stones call
lay down, lay down in the silt,
in the unceasing current.

¹ "Threshold" was first published in Terrain.org

INTERVIEW

By Chalise Fisk, *Tidal Echoes* Junior Editor

Oil and Honesty: An Interview with Artist and Professor David Woodie

I began attending the University of Alaska Southeast-Juneau in the fall semester of 2005. At 25 I was classified as a non-traditional student and here I was starting college for the first time. I had recently moved to Juneau, a city I'd never been to before, I was living in a house with someone I hadn't met until I stepped off the plane, and I was sitting in a classroom after not having been in school for seven years. I began to question my sanity. Then, in walks this self-proclaimed hippie with his long hair pulled back in a braid, sporting an untamed beard, and Carhartt overalls covering a flannel shirt. I looked curiously at him as he walked to the front of the class and realized that this was my Art Appreciation professor. In that moment I relaxed and realized I could survive going to school in this place that offered me professors who were so real. So, when I was told that David Woodie would be our featured artist for *Tidal Echoes* this year I jumped at the chance to interview him. I have gotten a chance to know this unconventional character while taking some classes with him and I hope by interviewing him I can open a window allowing others to get to know him the way I have.

As an artist in what medium do you prefer to work?

My preferred medium is oil and that's just about all of the finished work I do. But, I also use drawing and print making and just about any other medium, acrylic or watercolor for second mediums and for developing ideas. I may do drawings after I finish a painting in order to develop the idea further and then possibly develop it even into another painting, but all my finished work is oil so far.

Why did you choose oil?

It's the most flexible medium for the most part. It allows the broadest possible range of techniques, but it also accepts the kind of technique that I use. I use a variant which is probably closest to Venician technique, which was developed in Venice during the High Renaissance and it's been developed quite a lot since then. Like I said, it's a variant on that technique but it owes a little bit to Flemish technique as well. All of those are oil painting techniques. To some extent a very skilled person can mimic them with acrylic, but you're really fighting the medium when you do that. It really works best with oil. Oil is very translucent and it can be used for glazing. And glazing is a big part of the way I paint. Glazing is the use of extra medium in the paint to make it more translucent so the image has more depth. For example, it works well on skin because skin is translucent, so it reflects that in a painting.

What got you started in art?

I started like most people, drawing when I was really young. Actually, you heard it here first, I've never told anybody about this before in my entire life. But there was a kid named Gordy in the first grade who could draw dinosaurs and I absolutely loved it. He could really



Mitkof #3 by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on canvas mounted on wood panel

draw dinosaurs really, really well and I was just really impressed with it and I wanted to be able to do that so I started drawing myself and I eventually gravitated toward drawing sailing ships. Whenever I mention anything about drawing as a kid my mother reminds me of a drawing I made of a ship, and underneath it were the letters B-K-N-R. When she asked me what I meant by B-K-N-R I said buccaneer. So, it goes back about that far. I was really seriously interested in my teenage years and I started taking classes at the University of Oregon when I was about twelve. By the time I was eighteen I realized how difficult it was gonna be to make a living doing it. Plus, there was the general chaos of the late sixties and I had an issue with the draft. And so I pretty much was uprooted by the time I was about eighteen and I remained uprooted for quite a long period of time. I worked in the woods until the late eighties and then I moved to Juneau in '88 or '89 and decided to go back to painting. So, I started taking art classes here from Jane Terzis. She has been a huge help to me in getting back into doing art. Since '96, I have been doing it pretty much full time, in addition to teaching here.

When did you start teaching at UAS and what classes have you taught since you started?

Oh, this is my sixth year, so it was in '03. I've been teaching Art Appreciation and drawing all along. One semester I took Jane's intermediate, advanced, and senior drawing classes, but mainly drawing and Art Appreciation.

Is there a specific reason you teach these particular classes?

Those are the ones they needed someone to teach mainly. And drawing classes, it's not that easy to find someone that knows how to teach a drawing class. You kind of look for someone who knows how to draw.

It seems that would help.

(He laughs.) Yeah it really does. It's sort of like teaching Chinese, it really helps if you can speak the language. But anyways that's what was available and it worked out really well for me. It's two of the things I like the best about art. As you remember I love to go on and on, with a captive audience, about art history or various different artists. I never really thought I would really want to do that but I really enjoy it.

What do you enjoy most about teaching?

For a painter it's really possible to dig yourself into a hole, ya know? It's a very solitary kind of a profession. You can spend lots and lots of time alone in your studio and become fairly disconnected from the world and it's a common phenomenon for artists particularly working full time. And I think the thing that I like the most about teaching is that there are between 50 and 60 people who are relying on me for something or other. And, consequently, it becomes my social life. Just having some kind of interchange with other people about art is really valuable for me because otherwise I have a tendency to be a little bit of a hermit anyway. It's pretty easy to do that if you're an artist and I don't think it's too good for people to crawl too far down into that hole.

Do you remember the first piece you ever sold?

The first piece I ever sold, gosh, that would've been when I was a kid. But, since then the first piece I ever sold was the first piece I ever really exhibited. I had a piece that I made in 1996. I was fishing in the summer at the time; and that was getting a little bit frustrating; it wasn't going really well. I wasn't making very much money. I made a painting that I took a lousy slide of and sent it off to Anchorage to the All Alaska Exhibit and it won the Juror's Choice Award so I got \$1000 and first place out of 736 pieces. (He laughs.) That changed everything so since then I've been doing art pretty much full time.

Are you willing to sell all your originals or do you have any pieces you are unwilling to give up?

I think I have one painting that I don't want to sell, but all the rest of them are for sale and that one probably would be too if I could find a museum to buy it. I would like to have it in a public collection or just keep it, one of the two.

How do you approach your artwork? Do you do it when the mood strikes or are there times when you make yourself go and do it because you need to?

It's a little of both I suppose, ultimately. But it's really, really true the best way to get inspired is to just do it, ya know? If I'm having trouble getting going then I always just go back to drawing. I find that waiting for inspiration is a big mistake. The idea is to do it and that's where the inspiration comes from. It's a small percentage of the time you work when you're really inspired. Probably if you ever figured out exactly what percentage it was it would be appalling because it's probably less than one percent of the time that you actually work with that little angel on your shoulder. Once in awhile it happens; you can just feel it and there you go.

Do you have a creative process?

I do, I do. It's really complicated, but I do. There's various things I do that are pretty simple to describe to get it started like drawing. The last few years, the last two years or so, I've been having a little bit of a hard time getting myself going and what I do for that is to draw. I have a model come into the studio and I just sit and draw and usually out of that will come some sort of an idea for a painting. Right now I have about a half dozen paintings or so going that began that way, more or less. But I have all sorts of other things that I include in that process. My painting is pretty closely connected with the Pacific Northwest and Southeast Alaska, and also, to some extent other parts of the northwest. I mean British Columbia, the Yukon, other parts of Alaska.

Your paintings are primarily naturalistic paintings?

They're fairly naturalistic. They're narrative paintings and they're not literal at all. I don't have any commitment to realism or anything like that or at least not realism in the way it's commonly used. We refer to realism as high focus or closer to a photograph. Originally narrative painting was intended to tell a specific story, for example a religious or historical story. Since the early 20th Century the classification of narrative paintings has changed and includes any painting that suggests any sort of story. Currently, many narrative paintings are formed by a sort of surrealism. It doesn't necessarily tell a specific story but allows the viewer to interpret on an individual basis. I always leave enough room for the viewer to come halfway and interpret based on their own experience so there's some exchange between the painting and the viewer. As a general rule, with most paintings I like to have something painted from actual life; something painted from my imagination more or less, usually fairly abstract, and then something from some other reference, like a photograph or something I saw on television. I actually did paint a TV screen into a painting one time. Yeah, a painting that ended up in the landfill, but it was fun. I liked the TV screen. That part of the painting went really well. It had John Wayne on there and he was in a really fuzzy image like how you'd see on a funky black and white TV screen and it actually worked really well. You could recognize him and everything. It was fun, but it never really clicked, I just never could pull the whole thing together. It ended up in the landfill, which is not uncommon. Actually, Channel Landfill, I think it's Waste Management Associates now, has the largest corporate collection of my work in the American world. (We both laugh).

Clearly you exhibit within Alaska. You have a piece at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum, as well as at the Rasmuson Foundation. But do you exhibit outside of Alaska, as well?

Since I was a kid I haven't exhibited outside of Alaska. That's what I'm trying to do right now is to find places in the lower 48 where I can exhibit. Seattle and Portland are looking good to me right now. It's pretty difficult to cross that bridge. The good galleries and the museums aren't really interested in submissions. They want to have heard of you somewhere. Unfortunately, reviewers from magazines that cover the art world don't really come to Alaska because it's too expensive. There just aren't any reviewers. So, although I have shown in museums and things, which would get you more shows down south, there's a moat between the lower 48 and Alaska and it's really difficult to leap across. It's isolated here; it's difficult. You need some kind of an "in" to get to another place. I don't want to leave Alaska. I could work

in Western Washington or other places, but it's pretty much connected to this place in a lot of ways. I hate to refer to it as regionalism, but it has an element of regionalism, I suppose. So, I couldn't pick up sticks and move south.

What brought you to Alaska?

It was almost genetically predetermined. I grew up in Oregon. You're probably familiar with the fact that Alaska has kind of a special place in pretty much any western state. I think people have a sort of image of what Alaska is all about. My grandfather's generation in Oregon had all been loggers, and miners, and farmers and various things like that. My grandfather had come to Alaska in the late sixties and bought into a gold mine and he worked in that mine over the summer of 1970. I had an opportunity to work in that mine; I'm glad I didn't, but it kind of planted a seed in my mind. Later on when the forestry cooperative I was working for began to bid thinning contracts in Alaska I went. It was poorly bid so we didn't make any money, and I didn't make enough money to get back to Oregon (he laughs) so I'm still here. And that was thirty-some years ago.

Clearly, it had a positive impact on you because you're still here.

Yeah, I went to work at the logging camp across the island when the thinning didn't work out. I did that for the next thirteen years. Then I decided I wanted to go back to painting. I decided to start commercial fishing in the spring and summer. I had a troller and I worked for a friend on a troller, long-liner. I'm still doing that, actually. It makes me a few bucks in the springtime and summer. Fishing pretty much got me into a position where I could spend my winters pursuing painting and drawing classes. It's pretty much a self-educated kind of thing. I really couldn't afford to go to art school. So, I focused on life drawing, which I think is probably the core discipline of any visual artist, and then did a lot of reading and a lot of experimenting. I think it took seven winters from the time I got started. That's why my studio is now called Seven Winters; I worked for about seven winters at that before I started actually exhibiting much. That's when I got the Juror's Choice Award in Anchorage.

So what advice or artistic wisdom do you have for aspiring artists?

One thing I would say is to draw as much as possible. Drawing is a great way of learning to discipline yourself to visualize your ideas in a plausible kind of way. It isn't really necessary to become an expert renderer, but it is important to be able to develop in some direction or other. It could be an entirely idiosyncratic direction, but just being able to visualize your thoughts into some corporal reality is a really good skill. Another thing, for young artists, if you want recognition you should look for arts professionals. These juried shows are good because very rarely in any walk of life do you have an opportunity to have your work juried by someone who doesn't know who you are, who doesn't care who you are and doesn't have any commitments to a specific type of art. That is a rare thing where you'll have the opportunity to be juried by someone like that. You need to get your work in front of someone who really knows about art because there is a lot of confusing information that will come from your friends and family and people who aren't necessarily educated about art. So, when you have your work accessed in any way for any purpose make sure you have it done by someone who knows more about art than you do. Naive opinions can be valuable, but you need to understand what kind

of value it has. But you really want to get an opinion from someone who knows what they're talking about. I'm sure you've come across this with writing. You want to get it before someone who knows more about it than you. I could kick you all kinds of info about writing, but I wouldn't take it if I were you (he laughs).

David Woodie is an adjunct Professor of Art at UAS and a full-time artist. He has won a variety of awards for his art including the Juror's Choice Award in Anchorage at the All Alaskan Exhibit. One of his paintings, Untitled, which you'll find featured on the cover, is on display at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum.



Still Life by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on canvas

First Day of Fall

Overcast, autumnal afternoon.
Varied thrush, blending with the last
raspberries. Hummingbird feeders
hang like colored planets in some
science fiction scape, the hummingbirds
themselves long gone, no longer
orbiting, as the northern earth
tilts away from warmth and sunlight
into its polar den. Potatoes
harvested and cellered, garden turned.

—Juneau, September 22, 2008

Falling in the Garden

is something old men do. My uncle Gus
died in his garden. Once again, the turning
of potatoes and the liturgical
new year for Jews and Orthodox Christians,
new life unearthed with every turning fork.

I meditate on burying our dead,
the friends we lost this year, the rest of us
slowly dying, one way or another.
The endless rains have stopped, the sun briefly
warms the garden—Sunday afternoon, the Feast
of the Birth of the Mother of God, hope
at the harvest turning of the year, like
turning pages of Isaiah, living
out an acceptable year of the Lord.

I use the fork to slowly right myself
again, and one by one examine this
muscle, bone, and that, inventory all
my fallen self, accept that I am old,
and take again the turning fork in hand.

—Juneau, Sunday, September 21, 2008

After Finishing an Activities Report for the Dean

A dark, autumnal afternoon. I walk
my customary path along the lake,
the summer greenery now turning red
and yellow, brown, the lake at best reflecting
gray of sky and low hanging rain clouds
heading this way. Reflecting on the past,
I think of German poetry, the line
komm in den totesagten Park und schau,
come in to the park they say is dead and look

(in the original for understated
brilliance), here for meaning at the end
of life. On certain days it's difficult
to find. More German poems, Rilke's
"summer was so great," but here and now
there never was a summer; maybe this
is all there is and all there is to be—

a pattern we're reluctant to admit,
dissatisfied, and yet, afraid to let
it go, forever taking on too much,
afraid of missing some. Medieval
poetry now haunts me: *owê war sint*
verswuden alliu mîniu jâr, oh where
have all my years of lifetime disappeared?
Ist mir mîn leben getroumet, oder
ist ez wâr, was all my life
dreamed up for me, or is it really true?
Ou sont les neiges d'antan, where are the snows
of yesteryear, curriculum of life?

—Twin Lakes, September 13, 2008; revised October 27, 2008

Homage to Po Chü-I

*Grown this old, both of us together,
I still wonder what it's like to be old.*

...

*My love for old lost friends thickens
while memories of youth thin away:*

*there's nothing left but this idle talk,
enough and more for your next visit.*

Po Chü-i, Grown-Old Song, David Hinton translation

We linger over lines
from Po Chü-i,
aka
Bai Juyi, who writes
that once you're packed and ready
for your long journey
it doesn't really matter
if you hang around a while
longer.

The poems come alive
as old friends visit,
pause for midday naps,
and visit on,
until it's time to go:

lines
for assisted living,
life lines
from centuries ago.

—July 26, 2008

Nunc Dimittis

Make haste O God to deliver me!

Make haste to help me, O Lord.

Hear my prayer, O Lord

give ear to my supplications.

—Ps. 69 (70) and 142(3), chanted at the Office of the Parting
of the Soul from the Body, when a man has suffered
for a long time.

The mode now *nunc*

dimittis, O Lord

now lettest Thou Thy servant

depart in peace.

“‘Why can’t I die?’

he kept repeating,”

the night-shift report

at new year dawn.

With winter sunrise

New Year’s Day

you pass, the old man

gone, as new year

first-born baby boy.

And Eliot, *my end*

is my beginning.

—December 31, 2008 - January 1, 2009

Do Wise Men Have Bad Days?

It works like this: I give you a small portion of my wisdom in exchange for all of your granola.

I just wanted—I mean, I don't have any granola with me, but—

—You're expecting a little spiritual handout from a guy who doesn't need food to survive on a mountaintop, yeah.

No, I know y—

Yes, I'd like to know that man's secret too, because, uh, despite sitting up here in a pile of rocks surrounded by lots of lichen and a few berries, if people forgot about me, I'd never survive. Usually I get a bit of something to eat to compensate for interruptions.

That's—

Kind of ironic? I come up here for solitude, to get some thinking done and escape the drama, but I'm still dependent on people who want what I'm seeking but aren't willing to stick it out. Come look at the martyr!

Look,

Where?

I mean, Sir, I have a couple of Powerbars and an orange, if you're hungry, if you'd like, I mean... as great as granola is, a little variety might not hurt...

Yes, true. I'd like the orange very much. Thank you. It—

You're welcome.

...It only takes a few brushes with scurvy to really appreciate your vitamins... heh. So, young man, why did you come up here? You've got something on your mind that you can't chew, eh? Let me guess. It's a girl.

No, no, it's broader, about—life—I wanted to ask you if it has any particular mea—

For FUCK'S sake, that's the third time in a row now that I've been asked that question! Is this some sort of running joke? Has someone been putting you people up to this? "Go make fun of the old man up there? Ask him the big why?"

I'm sorry, no, nobody put me up to this. And yes, I guess I am having problems with a girl, but like I said, it's a broader—ah—crisis that's on my mind.

No, it's not broader. You're telling yourself it's broader, because it bothers you that deep down, we're all shallow. Write that down if you'd like—it's a cute quote.

Well...

Anyway, so you came up here because a girl... what problems has she given you? I'm going to imagine it's a very unusual problem... how about, you thought that you loved her and that she loved you too, but she left... yes, she left, and you're being too melodramatic to ask why she left you—and instead want to know why life is so cruel or something. So, you're telling yourself by now that this was an unavoidable lesson of God, perhaps your fate to be miserable and unloved, and you want somebody to validate your suspicions for you. Am I correct?

Well, actually, that's not far off. How did... is it true?

It's like a fortune cookie fortune, it's so general that it applies to everyone, but nobody

applies that reasoning to themselves when their fortune tells them that there will be 'a much happy occasion for Wednesday.' Don't fret—everyone who comes up here the first time is suffering from relationship problems. What else would inspire you to be alone on top of a mountain?

Except, what about you?

What do you mean, what about me?

You're on top of a mountain permanently, and you aren't suffering from broken-heartedness. What's your reason?

What? Seriously? Do you think I need a better reason? Wise men are men too. They need to eat, they need to sleep. They need to be entertained. They need women.

I thought you would have been... celibate or something, like a monk, I guess. It just seems like something a wise man would be—all virtuous or something.

Abstinence? Who taught you that? What's virtuous about it? Some sort of exercise in avoiding temptations offered by the devil? Waiting to find "love" and get married? Or better yet—avoiding girls altogether to preserve the integrity of your soul? People who fall in love with what they're told is beautiful end up in agonizing marriages. That's the real hell. In my opinion, there's nothing healthier than fucking.

But... you're sounding kind of strange.

I might have expressed my eccentricity by flinging feces, and you would have had no argument, would you? You would have been positively DELIGHTED to see an insane old man up here, so you could go down again and laugh at the idea of "wisdom," eh?

I, wait... what!

Come on! Use your words! I'm doing all of the talking here—if you want to learn anything, string together some polysyllabic sounds and bounce them off me! I'm up here by choice, because I've had my heart broken my fair share. You need to get back down there and experience your allotment too, if you ever want to become more than a simpering pansy.

Does that mean I'll end up a disgruntled old man on a mountaintop, too? Because that wasn't exactly the sort of destiny I hoped for. You smell like shit, act like an asshole, and I'm not sure that's worth... inner peace, or whatever it is you think you have. And, I hope "inner peace" isn't some sort of euphemism for a bowel movement in your pants, if you get my drift, because that would explain a lot.

Oh, that's really mature. But I'll take it. Thank you. A little bit of irreverence means a lot to me, you have no idea.

I mean, seriously, what are you doing up here, old man? What do you hope to achieve, on a mountaintop, before you die? It doesn't make sense to me yet—why you would wait here. It's clear you haven't found anything yet.

Maybe I'm not looking for anything.

Oh, come on.

What do you want me to say?! I'm trying to get closer to god? Purifying my soul? I feel like we've gone over this already—or maybe it was the last guy.

So you're not doing either of those things? I had this image of the wise man on the mountain—I know it's just a pop culture image, but it's all we've got to go on down there.

It's kind of interesting; the people most concerned with the immortality of their souls are those seemingly most lacking souls.

What?

Oh, nothing. Out of context, I'm just... for all intents and purposes you could call me... grumpy. I believed in a god yesterday, but then I woke up and it was raining, and my tarp—see my tarp? The blue one, now it has a hole right over where I was sleeping, thanks to some bored fucking bird, and I woke up freezing and it made my day generally shitty. And you'd expect me to laugh it up. That's life, right? That was god's design to teach me about the ups and downs. But I'm still an animal, and I still have emotions, and I'm having a really fucking bad day and am unapologetic for it.

I'm sorry.

I don't understand why people expect me to be above having bad days, like I'm some sort of freak who has this perpetual wax smile on my face, who can blow minds with little utterances and hand motions, wisps of incense curling around my head like a halo. Where's my fucking Fu-Manchu? I tried for three years to grow one, and it matted up into these hairballs at either side of my mouth and got a lice infestation. My greatest hygiene effort is invested in preventing a ridiculous mustache from growing. Wise men don't exist like you want them to. I make a terrible wise man.

I think you make a terrific wise man.

Oh stop.

No, I really mean it.

But you see, nobody is wise today—it's only awarded posthumously based on their quotability. Fair-weather pansy eccentrics who sit on grassy hilltops in the sun—what do they know. What could they know? Don't we learn from our mistakes, grow from our trials? It's one thing to sit on a mountaintop in total bliss from the perfect conditions outside. But what sort of wisdom are they going to give you? "Hey man! You should totally try this! Green grass with no dog crap on it! You can sit here forever, and it's really, REALLY comfortable!" See? What else do they have to do? I mean, they probably have fruit trees growing around them too; chirping birds – and then they have no concerns. What's the point of contemplating life if it is effortless? You could sit in the Garden of Eden, and all you'd have to say is "life is good," and "life is easy," and "My situation is one in a million." The wise man who has to make no effort to survive, who has all the time in the world to improve upon his outlook for no worldly concerns can furnish no advice to the rest of us— The wise man doesn't need other people. We find this enviable? We should find it pitiable. He'd be worthless. There aren't enough grassy knolls to go around, anyhow. It's not like these hermits or wise men are going to invite you to join them on top of their idyllic little mounds. Or else it's going to become the newest Calcutta of epiphany-seekers, crowded and diseased, the antithesis of what they seek. Wisdom dissolves into territorialism, and misanthropy. But I just said all that to build me up, to validate MY situation, and I'm doing no better. This whole contemplation business is a crock of shit—an uncomfortable waste of time.

Don't say that, don't give up!

I just told you I'm not doing anything, so what's to give up on?

Your... whole unique... motif, here. I think you stand a better chance than any of us of figuring out something profound, like this, even if you only stumble upon it. And hey—I can bring you a new tarp in a few days, if that'd help out.

You'd do that?

Sure!

That would be very generous of you, young man!

I'd be my pleasure.

And, perhaps...

I'm listening,

If I gave you my savings, could you bring me a pellet gun?

To the Plain Land

In the Land of Sweets,
Sugar Plum springs eternally
onto her Cavalier's shoulder
and there she rests,
a painted butterfly
immortal as first love.

But time and the music
move on. Our chief solace
is homely wit,
well-read simplicity
our one consolation.

How mere it is
and less,
flying not to the sun
but away,
to the plain land.

Flood of '69

I want to tell you boulder stories.
Explain the weightlessness of sandstone
balanced above a curving road, a home,

how its red and girth and beige—
but you know about distraction
and how rock stories

turn into stories about the rain.
How our mountain rain falls
in chunks of forty days and nights,

shoves itself down the withered throat
of the watershed, swirls across
speckled bedroom linoleum

and creeks through our kitchen windows,
torrents charcoaled sumac along the damp
remains of Chumash trails.

Our rain releases the boulders that crush
an old man against his white Frigidaire
just as he reaches for a bottle of Coke.

Our canyon rain swallows us, whole families
at a time, sleeping under the warm quilts
of our grandmothers and ferns and oak trees

while the mud overtakes us,
drags our Mary Janes and blue
Fiestaware into the raging divide.

Canyon rain is not the rain of Noah, rain
of rebirth. Our canyon rain strips the dirt
from the skin and bones of our world.

How a woman makes her own wine

What woman doesn't want a vat of men
to herself? To burn her bra and skivvies
after another week in go-go boots
and paisley. Slather herself with red grapes

and penises during a three day bash
of skin and loud music—stomp grapes for wine
that won't be drunk. What woman doesn't want
to bottle that piece of her untamed self?

Save it for an unexpected evening
with a childhood friend. Light up the memory
of that vat in the Birdsall's yard under
the eucalyptus, oak, and some blonde guy.

What woman wouldn't want to savor her
wild flavor, boastful and masculine, long
after wicked has become laughable,
abandon, the secret curl in her lip?

Untitled

In snow-white radiance the gardens lie,
With humid breath the rustling breezes blow.

— Let's speak of deepest matters that we know,
Of tender things, and things we're frightened by,
Let's speak of that from which we cannot fly:

You've lived your life, not noticing or trying,
In senseless episodes of dreaming, sighing —
And now, at last, this all is also done...

I listen to him speak without replying,
But then, he knows that no reply will come.

By Georgii Ivanov. Translated from Russian by Nina Chordas

Стоят сады в сияньи бело-снежном
И ветер шелестит дыханьем влажным.

— Поговорим с тобой о самом важном,
О самом страшном и о самом нежном,
Поговорим с тобой о неизбежном:

Ты прожил жизнь, ее не замечая,
Бессмысленно мечтая и скучая —
Вот, наконец, кончается и это...

Я слушаю его, не отвечая,
Да он, конечно, и не ждет ответа.

Георгий Иванов

Existential Sestina

If you were a dandelion flower
how would you wilt?
Like all the rest? Fragile
and weak, lost in these words
A confusing prison
mistaken for freedom

Quick sex of spring brings freedom
To these shivering acres of flowers
dribble their seed on concrete prison
floors. Caught in the wind, they'll wilt
And wallow, with hard worthless words
Stuck in a structure so fragile

What feeds this pitiful fragile
Growth? A sad hope towards freedom
Where no one rules but your words?
Has no one told you? You're a flower.
Beautiful but brief. You'll wilt
Like the rest. A cycle, called prison!

We'll live and die in this prison.
Together, inseparable and fragile
Til the end. Here's where souls wilt
Into each other. Passing this freedom
Onto the next bright yellow flower
They'll scoff at the seeds of our words

Begging and searching for the right words,
They'll whore themselves out for a prison
Wet with dew, sprouting a different flower.
The soil's all the same. Give into fragile
illusions, a shallow solace - this freedom.
Accept the clouds for what they bring, and wilt.

Weary petals, only last so long until they wilt

Throw your words
like paint to find freedom
from this prison

But remember. You're fragile
like a flower.

It's the knowing

Photographs are leaves fallen from
Trees of society

They pile up and we rake them into
albums and books

Perhaps it be better to burn them.
All those smiles into the flame.

Here's one!

Forty four humans compose the scene
Forty three form a half circle
One takes center stage

All are men save two

Nineteen are indistinguishable
Stitches of woolen coats
Top hats and driver caps

Five eagerly glance off, as if there's
Another camera

Thirteen look into the lens
Three among this group smile

One man, a gaze unknown
Straightens his tie

Five muse toward center stage
Four of them purse their lips
Thinking

One among them, a boy of maybe ten,
Raises his hand under his chin
Making a curious open mouth smile

The last human, center stage
His Eyes were watching God

He lay pretzeled around two
By fours, with a broken oil
Lantern by his side

After he'd been shot and
Mutilated his corpse was
Set aflame, causing crests
of charred flesh to form crusty
ribbons across his body

Welcome to Omaha, Nebraska 1919

It's the knowing that will
Kill you

I wonder what frames we'll be
Caught in. Damning us to hell

Did I mention. He was
Black?

No need. I'd guess.

Blood and Guts

I am a spiritual time traveler, a powerless observer, an out-of-body manifestation of consciousness, and I am watching myself as I lie on a gurney rolling towards the operating room. I think I might die. There are tears in my eyes. I am covered in sweat. My parents stand in the doorway. They think I might die. There are tears in their eyes. They are covered in sweat.

My parents turn to the waiting room when the gurney turns a corner. I watch the lights on the ceiling march past in a deadly procession until the gurney passes through the double doors into the O.R. The bright whiteness hurts my eyes.

I am lying on a blanket. Nurses pick it up and move me to the operating table. Its hardness and coldness permeate the thin barrier. They say things to me and I don't know what. I say yes and nod my head. They chuckle. They ask if I'm ready and I don't know what to be ready for. I motion that I am. A nurse holds a mask on my face. Alcohol and helium enter my nose. My body wants to laugh and my mind wants to cry. Soon I am asleep.

Four months earlier I sat in a cramped doctor's office with toys on the floor, waiting for a nurse in flowered scrubs to say I could go. Being there was a waste of time. There was nothing critically wrong with me. At least nothing that demanded so many x-rays, so many appointments.

But the doctor came in and he wore a grimace and I lost confidence. He sat down on the edge of the checkup table and the rubbery paper screeched.

"Ryan," he said, "it looks like you will need surgery."

Though I had tried to trick myself into thinking that it would never happen, I always knew it would. My spine had developed a 118° scoliosis, making my body perfectly unattractive and crushing my lungs. The doctor said my back was the worst he had ever encountered, and did not know if even surgery could fix it.

The operation is normally rather basic. A single cut is made along the patient's spine and stainless steel rods are screwed to the vertebrae; two weeks are allowed for inpatient recovery. With me, it will be a completely different procedure. The surgeons have a contingency plan for a scoliosis this bad. In the first stage, they will make a hole through my rib cage to my spine and remove the discs from between the affected vertebrae; I will be in traction for a full month before the second stage can begin.

I wake and it is nighttime, exactly 14 hours after they put me under. Or is it a nighttime? Could it be the following morning? or lunchtime on the same day? or heaven? or hell? It's dark, but shadows are cast by humans running around outside the door to the Intensive Care Unit.

Yes, the first stage of my surgery is over and I am alive in the ICU. A machine with a

button on a wire beeps rationally by my bed. I can press the button three times every 10 minutes for a shot of morphine. A tube drains water from my left lung. The water goes drip, drip. A 2 kg weight hangs from my head. It stretches my spine in the absence of tangibility. An IV line pumps water and a catheter drains water and a robot injects pain killers and a thousand other tubes and wires and life-support monitors make me a guinea pig of Western acupuncture.

I hold my button like a prayer book and push it religiously, three times every 10 minutes. A nurse feeds me Jell-O. I ask her if she can make the narcotics flow more freely. She says no, but she can make it give me morphine automatically so that I won't have to press the button. She screws some knobs but I still hold the button. I truly and literally have no control, but pushing it helps me forget.

My father wakes up and shakes my hand. My mother wakes up and kisses my forehead. I cry. I am happy to be alive.

Three hours later a doctor tells me I am okay. I want to tell him that he is wrong about everything, that I don't care how many years of school he went through, but that would be a lie. He nods to a nurse and she collaborates with a team of movers. I am lifted up and moved to a gurney. I break. I bleed. I scream. It feels like I am being bitten in half by a toothless dragon because so much of my spine is gone. After they get me on the gurney, they give me a few shots of OxyContin, an afterthought.

I leave the dark room and it is sunny; yellow light bounces off fake marble floors, illuminating happy animals on the walls and weeping ones huddled together on benches. How long has it really been? From my vantage point as an omniscient observer, I was unconscious for about 17 hours and in the ICU for another 13. On the ground, however, I might as well have been Odysseus.

I lie on my back and watch the ceiling march by. Bizarre patterns block the sky and twisting mobiles hang from it. They seem to prove the universe irrational. Which must be true, because if it were rational I would be reading in school and the nurses pushing my gurney would be hammering the knees of giggling children.

Two nurses are my guides through the labyrinth. The first is a middle-aged man with dark skin, a Caribbean accent, an explosive voice. He says that nobody can pronounce his real name so they just call him Happy. The second is a young woman who looks like she just graduated from nursing school. She sees me ogling her and feigns embarrassment. I fall asleep staring at her breasts. I never see her again.

I wake to a sterile room colored by golden sunlight. My father sits in an uncomfortable armchair watching a faintly humming television on the ceiling. He sees that I am awake and jerks himself out of the chair, interrupting Bill O'Reilly. He says he will get a nurse and runs out of the room. But when he returns, I have fallen back to sleep.

In the middle of the night I wake from a nightmare. In my dream I could not breathe but would not die. I was suffocating but my blood remained fully oxygenated. Doctors – sorcerers? demons? – held me down. Something was digging into my chest and making a hole out of which spilled my blood and guts.

A scream brings me to life, and it is my scream. I am drowning in sweat. The pain in my side has multiplied. My body spasms. Twists. Knots itself. The nurses run to my room. I scream again. I cry. In my sleep I rolled onto my left side where the tube reinflating my lung became kinked.

First things first. OxyContin flows like a river through my blood. The pain is still there but I feel nothing. They wipe the sweat off my body. Then they turn on a fan to keep the nightmares away. Sleep does not come easily this time. The nurses tell me to press the button if I need them. They leave and I turn on the television.

I have been lying in bed ever since my surgery three days ago. I have not eaten anything except popsicles, I have not drunk anything except popsicles. I have not smelled or tasted anything except popsicles. Today I am going to the cafeteria.

I wake at eight o'clock and a resident doctor is waiting with a team of movers. The resident says that he needs to look at the reinflation tube. I am naked and embarrassed. A pretty med student stands among the spectators. Her hair is red and her eyes are dark blue. She smiles when our eyes meet. She doesn't even see me.

She sees only a patient, a young, naked man on life support, with tubes pumping and draining, wires shocking and monitoring, drugs stimulating and numbing. The doctor has his helpers roll me onto my side so he can look at the tube

"Well, it looks pretty good, Ryan," he says, disappointed because he can't show off to the pretty med student.

"I'm going to pull it out now. It won't hurt."

I know he is lying, but I don't argue.

"Ready? One, two, three," he says.

The big surprise is that I don't cry. No scream, no curse, not even a tear. I just grunt, bite my lip, and bury my face in the bed. The spectators whisper among themselves as they leave. The pretty med student says something. I can't say what. She smiles, shakes my hand, and turns to exit my life. I never see her again.

The movers are waiting when I come to half an hour later. They have a Hoyer lift and my wheelchair. The chair has been outfitted with a crane. A metal arm extends from the back over where my head will be. A hook skewers the air off the end. From the hook will run a rope. It will attach to another hook that was screwed into my skull while I slept. From the hook I will hang for 12 hours per day every day for the next month. Doctor's orders.

The first step is to get me in the Hoyer lift. They roll me onto my side and push the sling under my left arm. Then they carefully do the same on my right. This is easy. After repeating this a few times, the sling is completely under me and they press the lift button.

Pain begins to leak past the OxyContin at this point. A few murmurs and then I begin to cry. The sling continues to raise my broken body off the mattress and every inch is an eternity of lashings. My spine is broken.

But soon it is over and I am in my chair and they are attaching my head to the crane. I am exhausted. Too tired to drive. My father puts my chair in neutral so that he can push me to the cafeteria. I am stiff. Perfectly straight. I probably won't be able to eat without puking. Maybe some Jell-O. This is just an exercise.

By the time I get back to my room I am ready to sleep. All that food, all that mush and gelatinous nutrition, has left me nauseous and tired. Just... 11 more hours. My dad turns on the television and leaves me with a videogame while he goes to lunch. A nurse hooks the drip machine up right next to me and starts a very gradual OxyContin flow. This is where I will be for most of every day for the next month, so I might as well be comfortable.

Much of the time I spend away from my room is of little consequence. At one and again at five, my father drives me back to the cafeteria. I eat the same things every day for the first week or so. Then I move up to oatmeal, dairy, and even a piece of pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving. As my food becomes more complex, I start to feel nauseous and weak more often. The doctors tell me that I am fine, that it is normal to feel sick after major surgery. I don't believe them. They are just trying to make me stop complaining. I think contemptuously that they have no right to be annoyed by my complaints.

My body refuses to make a bowel movement for 10 days. The nurses try all sorts of things, and are about to try an enema, but I get one out at the last minute.

I can't leave the hospital for the entire month. Twice I have visitors. Other than that, solitary confinement.

I have no privacy. The nurses. They wash me and watch me and see me and listen. I dread the morning shower. Naked on a gurney, my face burns as young women scrub my body. They report any abnormalities in my behavior to the psyche ward. One morning when sleep eludes I turn on a *Girls Gone Wild* infomercial. A nurse interrupts me halfway through and tells me to turn it down. I hope I never see her again.

There are some things that do not get better. OxyContin becomes a necessity. I cannot get up without it. I cannot stay up without it. At first, and again at the end, I cannot even think without it. It becomes my purpose; the only reason I live is to erase the feeling of being alive.

But maybe that is not so different from any other purpose. Maybe every answer ever invented to the question of the meaning of life is just a grossly complicated way of saying: The purpose of life is to escape the suffering that is life.

My life drains out of me like dirty water out of a sponge. I beat *Final Fantasy 10* for the third time and start watching the first season of *Family Guy*. Then one morning a doctor wakes me. The next surgery will proceed tomorrow. He says that I should eat as much food as I can today, because it may be the last time for a full week. Other than that, I have nothing to worry about.

The second part of the plan for fixing a completely unfixable scoliosis is much like the first part for any other. An incision is made along my spine and two stainless steel rods are screwed to the vertebrae. It is much simpler and much less dangerous. It will be relatively short and painless. I lull myself to sleep with that, my mantra.

When I open my eyes I am on a gurney rolling towards the O.R. I pass the same physical anomalies, the same contradictory images, the same surrealistic reality, and I begin to think that this entire hospital is a stage on which are run perverse skits and twisted plays for the enjoyment of some cynical deity. I listen to more than my share of televangelism; apparently, my survival proves the existence of an all-loving creator of the universe. But this is no way to treat an animal.

The complexity of the mobiles that decorate what should be the sky are an affront to the simplicity of my powerlessness; the decadence of the juxtaposition brought to life by the joyful and sorrowful animals completes the joke. I look around at my fellow humans for confirmation of my observations, but all I see is stoical professionalism and depressed humanity.

And then the humanity is gone and the gurney is in the operating room and they transfer me and the operating table is cold and someone turns a spotlight on and I am blinded and there are voices I don't understand and a mask is on my face and I am dreaming.

My eyes are awake before my body is. It is four o'clock the next morning, five hours before I am supposed to be awake. All the equipment meant to be gone by the time I live again is still stuck in me. A tube breaths for me, but I misinterpret it. It is a metal blockade suffocating me. Tubes drain blood and guts. I scream and thrash and doctors and nurses strap me down and push liters of morphine into my blood. They are demons. They are sorcerers. This shouldn't be happening. This should be a dream, a nightmare inspired but not caused by an accidental ripple in the space-time continuum. But this is not a dream. Nor is it an accident. I hear other children screaming, their lives ending, slowly.

They finally get me under after half an hour of combat. I am surprised to wake five hours later and find myself alive. The machines pump me with three times the morphine I needed before. A hideous pain in my back tears through the narcotics. All I can do is sip Jell-O and wait.

There is no journey to the rehab ward this time. I fall asleep and wake in my old room. It is quiet. No one is around. I smile inwardly. A physical smile would have been impossible. I know that I will be there for another month and should be depressed. But I am steeled. Bring the pain. Bring the blood and guts. Bring the constipation and suppositories and diarrhea and adult-diapers. Bring the staff infections and drug injections, the nurses and therapists and anesthesiologists. Bring it all, because I am not ready to die, and that is life. It may be no way to treat an animal, but I will not complain.

GEORGE PASLEY

Ketchikan

SOMETIME WALKING ON THE BEACH

sometime walking on the beach
you might find nothing but a trinket
which is certainly not as good
as finding a glass float from Japan
and definitely not as good
as hooking a halibut while fishing from the boat
but keep the trinket and hold on
until the tide returns,
it is real proof
that there is someone out there.



Untitled by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on jute mounted on wood panel

Connecting the Pieces

As I look for something new to wear each day, I see my atikluk (uh-tick-look) hanging from a white, plastic hanger in my closet. When I see it I think of my home up North, I think of my Inupiaq culture. Some days I want to put it on and wear it to work and school because it represents who I am, but I don't. This unique piece of traditional clothing or "calico parka" is colored a bright light blue and has a white and bluish flower (maybe forget-me-nots?) pattern, making it stand out among the dark and dull wardrobe that I own. Imagine how much it would stand out among a group of students at the university. It's not just the color or the pattern that makes it stand out; it's different. It's different from the "normal" clothing that everyone else wears, different from the normal clothing that I wear. If I wasn't so afraid or ashamed or embarrassed I'd put on that atikluk without hesitating and wear it more often instead of letting it collect dust in my closet. But I don't put it on and it sits there.

In a different place, in a different world, in Noatak, Alaska, the place I call home, this vibrant piece of clothing standing out is a good thing. When you're out in the short, shrubby tundra picking berries or out along a rocky riverbank you want to be able to stand out so that your mom, your sister, your aunt, or your grandma can spot you. You want them to spot you when you're out wandering by yourself because one of you might run into a giant brown bear or some other dangerous animal. If you're not looking out for wild animals, you'll want to be able to keep an eye on the others you're with so that none of you get lost since this may be easy to do when you're out in the middle of nowhere. With this in mind, it makes me think that the Natives of my culture purposely created this piece of clothing so that it would be helpful and useful to them in situations like these. If not, maybe they created it because it looks pretty and is "fashionable" among our culture. That's a question I should ask my grandma; "Why was the atikluk created to be lightweight, brightly colored, and shaped like a dress?" With the harsh way of life they had back in the day before the village was settled and "discovered" by the missionaries, I don't see why they'd create something without thinking critically about how it would and benefit them. From comparing these two different places - Noatak and Juneau - you'd see how the atikluk standing out would differ. It is a good thing when you're out in the country in the path of grizzlies, but not necessarily a good thing when you're in a city trying to fit in with everyone else.

When you look at the atikluk, you'll see a hood hanging at the top of this bright colored piece of clothing. Some hoods are pointy at the tip and goofy-looking, but the hood on mine is normal and rounded and just big enough to cover my entire head. It's not really different from any other hood except for the fact that it has a white lace around the edge of the front. If you have the hood on your head, you'd see the lace around the edge of your face. This is just a decorative touch I guess. Sometimes I think of the hood as my shelter, it keeps me protected. I'm able to put it over my head and feel safe. It helps keep the mosquitoes off my neck when I'm picking berries during the summer, it gives me a shade from the sun when I've been out all day long, it keeps the dust off of my hair when I'm riding a four-wheeler on the dry dusty gravel roads back at home, and even though it's not waterproof, it keeps the rain from directly hitting

my head. This hood doesn't always keep me sheltered though. I still don't feel safe enough in it to be able to wear my atikluk out in public in a city like Juneau. This hood doesn't prevent me from seeing all the people staring at me or hearing people ask questions about what my traditional clothing is called and where I'm from. It doesn't stop me from having to explain to people where this strange piece of clothing comes from and the "unique" culture that I am a part of. Yes, I am proud to be Inupiaq. I'm proud to be part of the culture that lives in the most northern part of Alaska, part of the culture that lives and survives in a cold and harsh environment, part of the culture that used to live entirely on the land and continually travel every season following the animals. But why can't I just be treated like everyone else? Do I have to be different because of the culture I was born into?

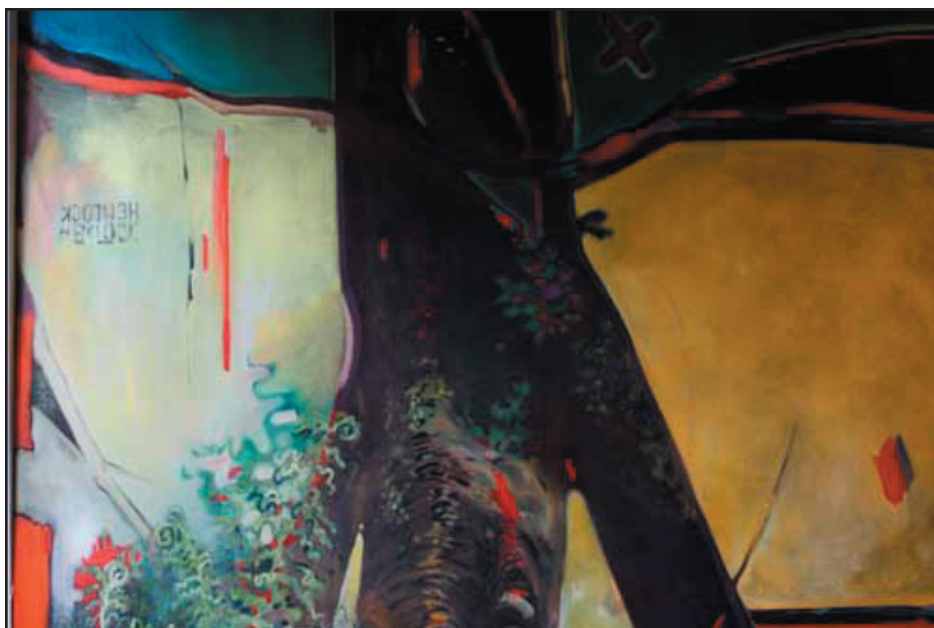
Below the hood is the trunk, the biggest part of the atikluk. The trunk looks pretty much like a sleeveless t-shirt. If you think about it, almost every piece of clothing that covers the upper part of your body has a trunk (minus things like ridiculous bikinis). I guess you could extend that and say everyone has a trunk. We are all human beings and we have the same body parts, yet we are still defined by our differences. This could be a good thing because people are unique, but it depends on what differences you're being defined by. These differences may be the color of your eyes, the color of your hair, the color of your skin, or the color of your personality. Whatever the difference is, it will always define you. You can either be proud of that uniqueness because it makes you stand out or you can be ashamed or embarrassed and try to hide it. I get through each day just trying to "fit in" with everyone else because I hate attention. I may be different, but sometimes I don't want to be. I don't want to be treated special, treated differently. My skin color isn't white (at least not entirely-it will be if I don't get any sun soon), but why do people always have to state the obvious?

In the front of the trunk sits a giant pocket. This pocket resembles the ones you see on the front of hooded sweatshirts. Once again, it is different because it has a white lace along the edge of its outline. It is the suitcase that holds the baggage. This baggage could be anything; it depends on what you're holding on to. For me, mine might include my cultural baggage. I grew up with my white father and my native mother. I was stuck in the middle of two different worlds, but I learned how to coexist in both. I had to respect my cultural beliefs and the beliefs of my father. I had to meet the expectations of my village and the expectations of my family. Of course, problems arose because of the cultural differences between my father (an outsider) and my village. Other baggage might include all the knowledge that I've accumulated over time, whether it's from the schools I've attended, from the people I've met, from the elders I've talked to, or from the family members I've grown up with. All of this knowledge is worth the world to me and it is what I hold onto the most. I would never give it up for anything. The pocket on the atikluk is nowhere near close enough to hold all the baggage that I have, good or bad, but it is able to carry some stuff like that mosquito dope that I use to keep the bugs away.

On the left and right side of the atikluk are two sleeves that are attached to the trunk. They are extensions that reach out and yearn for life and knowledge. The life of the Inupiaq was tough when they were living off of what was available to them, living off of natural products of the Earth, but I think things are just as tough now because of the intermingling between two cultures. The arrival of the missionaries and their belief systems has changed the traditional

belief systems of my culture. Because of this, the Inupiaq culture is struggling to exist. Elders try to pass on what they know to their children and grandchildren before they pass on and Inupiaq classes are made mandatory for kindergarten through eighth grade in the schools, but this isn't enough. It's hard to follow the traditional ways when you're away from home and going to school in a place like Juneau to further your education that will someday benefit you and your culture at home. When I go back to Noatak to visit every now and then I eat the traditional foods, I go out berry picking, I go out hunting, I speak the part of the language that I know, I indulge in the arts and crafts of my culture (such as beading and sewing), and I follow the traditional beliefs and values. I can't necessarily do the same in Juneau, but I try. Soon, after I'm done getting all the education I need I can return home to live the life that I should, the life that I want to live. I am those sleeves that are yearning out for life and for knowledge. I just hope that I'm not the only one among my culture who's going after those hopes and dreams.

At the very bottom of the atikluk is the "skirt." The skirt lets you know that this atikluk was made for a female. The male has his own type of atikluk which is pretty much the same but without the skirt. Being an Inupiaq and a female also makes things a little more difficult. It goes back to that whole being defined by your differences thing again. Since the beginning of time males and females have been thought of as different, thought of as one better than the other. I can't necessarily say that males and females are treated differently among my culture or at least I'd like to think that they don't, because both are important. Both did their part in getting the food, cooking the food, taking care of the family, and doing what they had to survive. I'm sure



Hemlock by Mary Henriksen, Ward Cove
Oil on canvas



Klawock Island by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
Oil on canvas

there are differences that exist, they're just a little bit different from the ones you might see every day. Nevertheless, because I am a female Native I would probably be treated even more differently in a white world. Things like this make it frustrating to try to live in a white world where you are competing against others different from you, others who have different belief systems.

All these pieces are important, but the entire atikluk wouldn't be held together if it weren't for the thread. Things like superglue won't work, so there is no substitution. The thread, the stitches, and the seam all work together to keep everything from falling apart - just like I put a smile on my face, go to work, go to school, and keep myself together while living in the world that I am not accustomed to. I realize that I am no longer home anymore and tell myself that it will always be there waiting for me if I ever need it. It will always be my safety net for when I can't hack it in a place where the Natives around me aren't Inupiaq but instead they're Tlingit, in a place where I am often thought of as a Tlingit, in a place where I travel by car instead of snowmachine, in a place where I rely on grocery stores to get all my food, and in a place where I am alone and my family isn't here to comfort me and tell me everything's going to be okay. I am on my own and I need to keep myself stitched together. I do this by telling myself that I can make it in this world and that I am just as good as any other person around me. I have to get through school for myself, my family, my village, and my people and it is a big responsibility.

All these pieces are stitched together, but my atikluk is definitely not perfect. Nothing is ever really perfect. I actually made this atikluk two summers ago and it was the first one I had ever made. I was home visiting my family when my younger sister helped me get the idea to make it in the first place. She made one in Inupiaq class at school, but I never got the opportunity to make one myself. It was a nice, hot sunny day in the lifeless village and we didn't have anything to do. Somehow we came across the idea of making an atikluk and since my sister had kept some of the basic instructions on how to sew it together, I was convinced and determined to make one. We hopped on our ancient worn-down four-wheeler and drove with

excitement to the local Noatak Native Store to look at fabric. When we got there I was kind of bummed because there wasn't much to choose from. We saw about twenty, if that, different designs and most were pretty dull. I almost changed my mind about making the atikluk until a bright light blue fabric with a flower pattern on it caught my attention. I immediately grabbed it and asked for my sister's opinion. She agreed that it was perfect and we bought about four yards of it along with some Rik-Raks (trimming) and thread. We rushed home to begin the project. I found that the hardest part about putting together the whole thing was making the patterns and it was what led to the mistakes I made. After basing the patterns on the atikluk my sister had already made and estimating what might fit me, I had to later add in extensions to different areas of the atikluk. I had to add an extension to the neck area because I messed up on the shape of the top part of the trunk, I had to make the cuffs a little longer than usual because I made the sleeves too short, and I had to add an extension to the skirt because I didn't make it wide enough. I laughed at these mistakes, but knew I was able to fix them and they will always remind me of this awesome learning experience. I don't care that it didn't come out perfect. I just enjoyed making my first atikluk.

When you connect the pieces - the hood, the trunk, the pocket, the sleeves, and the skirt with thread - you see the final product, a beautifully colored atikluk. It may not be made by a big brand name company like the rest of the clothing people normally wear, but it is something my culture wears. It is traditional and I'm proud to say that I own it. Better yet, I'm proud to say that I made it. Maybe I don't feel comfortable wearing it here, but I do when I'm home. I'm sure it has to do with a sense of belonging. When I was up in Anchorage for the Alaska Federation of Natives Conference I saw a colorful array of atikluk's everywhere in the building and I knew right away that I belonged. I was surrounded by my people. I wish I could re-live this moment and feeling every day, but everyone needs to adapt to changes, like my ancestors did when the missionaries "reformed" them. I am adapting to changes, but am also holding on my Inupiaq culture. From looking at this atikluk you would never guess that it represents so much, but it has its stories and it means something to me. My Inupiaq culture, my village, my family, my friends, my education, and my experiences all connect together just as all the different parts of the atikluk do.

Driven By the Tides

This is a story of peace broken by violence. It takes place in wilderness ruled by the tides.

Near the end of the story two men sit on rocks above the high tide line watching confused seas in Stephen's Passage. They are down to coffee, miso and rice. Soon that will be gone.

They are uneasy, not because of food but because of the lack of freedom imposed by the four foot seas. Three miles away is Marmion Island. From there the protected waters of Gastineau Channel offer an easy paddle to their homes and families.

The tide is right for crossing Stephens' Passage but not the wind, which pushes large waves on to the beach. The men decide to wait for the evening tide with hopes that the wind will drop with the sun.

It is a good place to wait out the wind, especially on this day warmed by the sun. The wind keeps away mosquitoes and the persistent deer flies of Admiralty Island so they can enjoy the primary colors of forest, ocean and sky.

Ten days ago the men had paddled up the channel on an incoming tide, loaded their kayaks and gear on a small hand tram and pushed it to its terminus at a small creek. It had to be done quickly so they could arrive at the creek at high tide. Only then would there be enough water to float their boats down the creek and across the mile long mud bar that protects the exit point for Seymour Canal. No bears distracted them from the work of transiting to the wilderness.

Days in Seymour passed in a series of high and low tides. They exploited the tide's current, sometimes waiting for hours for it to turn. At paddle's end a high tide could carry them far up the beach where tent sites were a short carry away. On windy days they waited until the tide joined the wind in one direction, which lowered dangerous seas.

Soon only tide, wind and daylight mattered. The Tide brought the men peace. Deer and birds approached them, apparently curious and without fear. Hummingbirds landed on nearby branches to tilt their heads towards the men as if in study. The always curious seals swam close to their kayaks by day and closer to the men in the evening when they sketched something on a beach.

The men began to see in a different way. New patterns formed in the forest or flooding waters at high tide. Things that they had taken for granted rose in importance.

They cringed when a carelessly tossed dry bag broke down grass blades and at the carnage in a colony of barnacles after they walked over a beach at low tide. Guilt over their damaging ways lessened when they saw fawns eating young plant growth and kingfishers diving on small fish near their camps. No being could pass through here without taking life from another.

Even so one of the men dreamed that he stood alone on a beach, paralyzed by concern over how many creatures would die with each step he took toward his camp. The tide waters reached mid-calf before he woke up. That morning, next to his tent he stumbled in a hole dug

in the night by a brown bear. A fawn approached him with searching eyes. He spoke and she moved back into the bushes.

If the other man experienced similar dreams and encounters he did not speak of them. Being men they didn't speak of such things but watched each other in judgment. Each passed the other's tests and their friendship deepened.

On their last night in the wilderness the men camped at the Oliver's Inlet tram terminus. Five brown bears grazed near them on beach grass. Neither bear nor men seemed concerned about the presence of each other.

At day break the men paddled down Oliver's and let the current of the outlet channel take them toward Stephens' Passage where wind and high seas blocked their passage.

Across the outlet channel, which now had three foot high standing waves, a doe moved cautiously out of the old growth, sniffed the air and moved into the water. Surfing over the wave tops, she landed 50 feet below the beached kayaks. The men stopped talking while the deer walked up the beach toward them until the wind dropped enough for her to pick up their scent. Cringing, she disappeared into the old growth spruce forest.

Inspecting the deer's landing place the men found crushed bodies of young mussels with shells too new to harden. Out on Stephens' Passage a flash caught the men's eye. More flashes followed about a paddle stroke apart. Someone was crossing the passage against the tide and wind. They waited for him to land or drown. He landed.

The new kayaker reached a stretch of calm water near the mussel nursery. Concerned for the fabric hull of his folding kayak he exited his boat in a foot of water and rubbed a booted foot through the nursery. When he saw that the mussels' shells gave under his boot he dragged his loaded kayak across the entire body of young mussels.

Knowing that the newcomer couldn't leave until the tide changed in five hours, they said nothing. At first they felt like cowards for being unwilling to confront the new man. After spending some hours with him they realized that he would never understand.

The visitor had spent enough time in Alaska water to understand. He had paddled the big outside waters off Sitka, the Bay of Pillars wilderness, and the confines of the Wrangell Narrows. The volume of our wilderness made him a spendthrift. He thought nothing of destroying what he came here to see.

When an incoming tide reversed the flow of the inlet stream the visitor rode it into Oliver's Inlet. He would write a kayaking guidebook for Southeast Alaska, this man who ignored the tides when he could.

In the heat of the day the men moved into the old growth to sleep on moss, heads on roots of 200 year old spruce. Then they cooked the last of their rice on the beach and piloted their kayaks down the inlet stream and into the waves. The wind had dropped some by then and the sun had almost slipped behind Douglas Island. They paddled side by side, surprised at how well their boats cut through the three foot waves as they quartered into them.

One of the men knew more about kayaks and big water. The other man followed this veteran's directions, even when told him to turn his kayak so that it surfed on four foot following seas.

It took more work to keep the kayaks upright now. An unseen hand randomly jerked

the stern right or left. More than once they had to use their paddle to brace so they would not flip over. Sometimes a wave would collapse of its own weight, showering salt water over the kayakers.

The less experienced paddler felt fear rising but had no time to yield. Once hearing his friend call out he turned to see him crossways to a rogue wave. The wave collapsed and lost power before it could flip the boat.

As dusk built they reached sheltered waters near Marmion Island. The off shore wind carried the scent of Hemlock resin, which excited the less experienced paddler as all his senses were heightened. A gift of the Tide.



Lunch by David Woodie, UAS Faculty, Juneau
40" x 40" oil on jute mounted on panel

The People

A conqueror for the queen;
An explorer landing in the new world.
Imagine a place called the new world!
Sounds like Heaven.
With abalone beads & salmonberry dyes
Carved cedar helmets & paddles
Fur blankets & leather slippers
Drum dancing cosseted by Evergreen Trees in the night
Watched over by a slice of the moon
Tongues cluckling Raven speak for storytelling.

Imagine the tribe's welcome, the voyager's hesitation,
His fear,
Their embrace –

His awe at the prize before him: "A Neighbor."

His Distress.

One wonders...
After being accosted by the sea for weeks,
his cheeks affronted by the salt spray,
his ambition hardened,
his route etched,
his fraternity threatening mutiny,
his gut a vat of wine,
One wonders...
If the message couldn't have been any closer to,
"Someone already lives here?"

Howling Dog

I pulled the old blue VW bus into the parking lot of the Howling Dog Saloon, just north of Fairbanks. It was June 21st, 1992, and we had come to drink beer and watch the Midnight Sun volleyball tournament. I bought two Alaskan Ambers at the bar and followed Dave out onto the patio to watch the players and enjoy the late evening sun.

It was a warm still night, and the sky was bright at 11 p.m. The game was good, but the cold beer was better. I went back in for two more.

I was startled when the loudspeaker crackled on. "Al Blake, please come to the bar." I didn't see any movement towards the bar from inside or outside.

"Maybe Al's not here," I murmured to Dave as I slid back onto the bench next to him and handed him his bottle. Ten minutes later the voice came over the speaker again. "Al Blake, please come to the bar." Again, no movement, at least from outside where the volleyball game was going strong.

A few minutes later the loudspeaker crackled to life one last time. "Al Blake, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital called. Your wife is in labor." A chair toppled over with a crash and loud footsteps could be heard running through the bar, followed by the revving and then peeling out of a motorcycle from the parking lot.

"Must have been Al," Dave whispered to me.

DANIEL STRONG

UAS Alumni, Juneau

Winter Cabin Lullaby

Morning murmurs and steamed
Whispers lift us briefly from sleep
Shuffled steps, the scrape and flash
Of a match, the woodstove lit
Are we forever trying to crawl back
Into our dreams? Let's drift like
Babies in our cozy sleeping bags
Until the floor is warm



Chain Gang by Bonnie Elsensohn, Sitka
Acrylic

A Review of Social Groups in Female Homo Sapiens as Exemplified by Mammary Restraint Apparatuses

Bras. They come in as many shapes and sizes as there are women. There are bras for every occasion, for every outfit. There are sports bras, strapless bras, full cup bras, demi cup bras. Padded bras and underwire bras. Minimizers, maximizers, maternity, and nursing bras. Lingerie and mastectomy bras (Pourtauborde para 1 – 17). Even with so many variations, there are similarities amongst them all. Parts to love and parts to hate. Much like a group of women. In every group of friends, each woman takes on a role. Each role is defined by various qualities, qualities having varying degrees of importance.

The cup of the bra is the part every woman (and man) is most familiar with. It sticks out there for the world to see, stealing the spotlight from all the other equally important parts. No one notices the lacy side panels or four-hook back latch when a double D mountain is casting a shadow over all the rest. Every group of female friends has a lead lady. She attracts all the men and decides what bar, restaurant, or movie to go to. She sets the tenor for the whole evening, sets the bar for how fancy the girls dress. Aside from aesthetics, the cup is the part that needs to fit the best. A woman may deal with a bra being a bit tight around the torso or loose in the straps. But when the cups are too big, the breasts just float around in the wide open space. The cups may not have a stiff enough structure to hold up over the vast expanse beneath them and flatten out, wrinkle or, heaven forbid, concave. A cup too small is even worse. It causes bulging and spillage. While spillage out the top of the cup could be considered “cleavage” (Is Your Bra the Wrong Size para 2), bulging out the bottom is just gross. And uncomfortable. Bottom bulge comes from the unfortunate uniting of a too small cup and a too large band. Honestly, the fitting of the cup is paramount to the front and side view of the entire breast region. Due to the aesthetic importance of the cups, they have the most diversity in design. Depending on their temper they may be lace and frills, cottony comfort, or a high-security, ultra-coverage polyester-blend. The cup sets the mood for the whole rest of the bra. You won’t see an edgy black and white silk cup attaching itself to a blue cotton strap or an adorning pink flower. Naivety and sultry do not pair well.

Speaking of straps, those come in many different shapes and sizes as well. The strap is really the easiest part of the bra to deal with. The reason for this is that, other than in some sports bra varieties, the straps are adjustable. They can expand or contract as needed, lengthen or shorten. There are now styles that let you decide whether the straps cross in back, loop around in a halter, or disappear altogether. The straps are there to help the cups, compliment the cups’ style, but go away when the occasion warrants. Often times it is the strap that peaks out of an outfit, making appearances when it has not been invited. During a girls-night out, there tends to be one friend who, while an integral part of the group, tends to over-indulge or just take things too far. She can be a lot of fun, but often leaves the group wondering why they invited her in the first place. As a preventative measure against the strap’s voyeuristic propensities, ladies learn early to coordinate the bra strap color with the shirt, dress, or skin color. This keeps the disruptions

to a minimum. Though the strap plays second fiddle to the cup, its role is just as important in the forming of the bra. The straps prevent the rest of the bra from descending to the navel and freeing the breasts. Depending on the occasion, the straps can go about their duties in a variety of ways. The strap can be wide and padded for ultimate comfort and anti-slippability. Or it can be pure lace – looks good but very scratchy. The straps can be thin like a spaghetti strap tank top, designed to be seen. Or they can be clear, with the intension of not being seen. Straps can be pretty or functional or not there at all, whatever the cups demand.

The underwire is another optional addition to the bra construction and it also supports the cups, like the straps. They lend a structure to the bra that many a ladies cannot do without. Underwires are pretty standardized. They are usually metal, occasionally plastic, but always inflexible. The underwire holds up what the cup contains and its importance varies with the size of the cup. The underwire is one part of the bra that is purely functional. The underwire is oftentimes the least comfortable aspect to the bra, no matter how necessary. The underwire is unforgiving. It digs in. It creates bulges where bulges do not belong. Sometimes it breaks, which is the one part of the bra that is virtually impossible to fix, usually requiring more than a needle and thread. Most women have experienced an inopportune breakage. One of my friends recalls a day at work when her underwire broke through the side of the cup and stabbed her under the armpit. Unable to stand it for the rest of the day, she escaped to the bathroom to try and fix it. Her solution: pull the underwire out, unfortunately leaving one breast lifted and perky, the other now sagging. If I ever find a bra that does what it needs to do without an underwire, I will buy a hundred of them and never wear an underwire again. Some things we just keep around until something better comes along.

Other parts of the bra that cause countless issues are the side panels. The side panels extend from the sides of the cups to the back of the bra, where the clasps attach. The truth is, the side panels cause the most unsightly transformations to a woman's body if they aren't the right fit. The side panel's primary purpose is to hold the cup in place, snug against the body. Secondary to that purpose is a function having to do with excess flesh. The side panel serves to hold in back-bulge. Some of the problems blamed on the side panel can be pinned on the wearer, since there really is an art to putting on a bra and one step is often missed. After a bra is hooked closed and situated with the breasts in place, after the straps have been pulled over the shoulders and possibly tightened, there is another step. A very important step. I kick myself for the years I lived with an unaccountable bulge, which was due to my own ignorance of this pivotal step, made up of three actions.

1. Lean forward.
2. Reach into the bra, between the side panel and flesh.
3. Pull said flesh forward, cramming as much into the cup as possible.

This one missed step could account for most bra malfunctions. Inclusion of this step can lead to an upped cup size. It does wonderful things. But even with the step, side panels are wearisome components. Some side panels are lax in their operations and do their duty poorly. They may be too narrow, causing an extra crease. They may be too tight on the edges, too loose in the middle, creating two extra creases and a roll. Then there are the side panels that take their job a little too seriously. They are wide, uniformly snug, and uncompromising. These side panels hold in that

back-bulge like nobody's business. These misguided side panels produce unsightly displacement bulges, to the top and bottom of the side panels. Every entourage requires one woman who is supposed to keep it all together. She's supposed to make sure no one goes home with a loser, no one passes out in the bathroom, and all the girls stick together. Different women fill this role to varying degrees of efficiency. It is a rare find indeed, to happen upon a bra with appropriate side panels for one's use. With such a functional purpose, side panels rarely have attractive flourishes to make up for their short-comings. Even if a side panel happens to employ a little lace or a little satin, those aesthetics often lead to the problem, being too soft or not stretchy. So, even though the side panels are pivotal in holding all the parts of the bra together – the cups, the straps, and the clasps – it is near impossible to find a perfect fit.

The closure of a bra generally correlates with the side panels. If the side panels are wide, the closure has more hooks. If the side panels are narrow, it has fewer hooks. Some styles of closures don't use hooks but use a hinge-type clasp. What is nice about the hook closures is that they are usually adjustable, allowing up to an inch of give or take. Some bras, most evidently the sports bra, have no closure at all. No muss, no fuss. Closures can sometimes be found on the front of the bra, linking the cups, but are most often on the back of the bra attached to the side panels. The closure isn't fancy, it isn't obtrusive, and it isn't necessary. It's a little extra that some people choose to have but more often have no choice since that's just how bras are made.

Sports bras are the most notable exceptions to the many varieties of cups, straps, and such. Sports bras have one purpose, and it isn't to make the breasts look good. They are there to hold those babies in place, no matter how vigorous the activity you put yourself through. In high school, girls started layering sports bras to gain enough stability during gym class or basketball. In my case, a regular Cascade sports bra or two weren't going to do it. I had to go see "The Bra Lady." She did professional fittings for the generously endowed. I almost cried when she forced me into the behemoth designed to control my pair of 34 DD. That thing had supports. The straps were an inch wide. The cups actually had underwires, the first I'd ever seen such a thing on a sports bra. Reinforced seams ran up and down the cups, three to a boob. Well, six to a boob, since there was apparently only one with that thing on. The uni-boob. Of course all those seams could be seen through a t-shirt. The bra was tight, too. The bra lady insisted I go down to a 32 DD, just to make sure my girls were held in place. Try running a mile in that thing, then breathing. My mom bought me two.

Aside from the functional properties of the typical bra, a noteworthy addition of purely aesthetic utility is padding. It's just there to make everything look better. It can come in the form of foam, jell, or water bag. It lifts, separates, and helps us to pretend there's something there that isn't. Not many women would object to a little extra padding and some actively seek it out. Padding does nothing to take away from the overall bra experience, though I can't really say that from personal experience (34 DDs?). I have a friend who insists that padded bras are uncomfortable, but I have several more who swear by the WonderBra. Everyone cheers "the more the merrier" when the padding tags along. When the girls go out, fun can be had. But, everyone knows that one person who can make any night a blast. She tells the best jokes, can talk anyone into dancing, and never steals the other girls' eye candy. With many of the bra parts having such mundane tasks as holding in back-bulge, everyone can use a little light-hearted

squishiness to make the day go by faster. Every ensemble benefits from that carefree addition.

All the bra parts have a function to uphold and purpose to fulfill, be it the leader, trend setter, support system, or accessory. Each part lends to the whole and each part only works in conjunction with the other parts. All the pieces of the bra work well together, complementing one another's style. Whether the group is cotton, silky, strapless, or austere, all the parts prop up the others, and appreciate what each has to offer to the whole. That's what it means to be a woman.



Douglas Island Bridge by Alan Munro, Juneau

Going Home

It's colder than Hell, so the stories tell,
In this land of the midnight sun.
When the sun goes down, cloaked by winter's gown,
Life here just ain't fun.

It's dark in the morning and dark at night,
And dark the whole day through.
Like Sam Magee you'll want to flee,
Let the Devil take his due.

As the summer's breeze blowing through the trees,
Fades fast from your frozen mind,
Ice and snow and the north wind's blow,
Is all that's left behind.

It was '49 when it crossed my mind,
Just to get away.
So I set a course for the frozen north,
And when I got here, knew I'd stay.

Now fifty years have come and gone,
And I think each year gets colder.
Old Man Winter laughs and taunts,
As he sees me getting older.

The northern lights don't cheer me up,
With the joyous swirls they make.
There's an aching in my lonely heart,
That I just can't seem to shake.

My darling wife, my joy in life,
Is gone, so I'm going too.
I'll cross the floor, go through that door,
And leave this note for you.

It just feels right on this frozen night,
As I'm chilled down to the bone,
To take this walk as with God I talk,
Don't be sad, I'm just going home.

Author and Artist Biographies

Apathy, Christina (Juneau) – Christina was raised five minutes from the beach on the Gulf Coast of Florida to a German mother and a Hungarian father. In 1994, she won a graduate assistantship to study acting at New York University. Christina moved to Southeast Alaska just over two years ago. Her first published poem “Marmelada y Tostada” toured the transit system this past year as a Poetry Omnibus winner.

Bettridge, Loren (Douglas) – Loren has lived in Juneau since 2001. While attending UAS he studied Creative Writing with his main emphasis in Procrastination. Loren graduated from UAS in 2008. Loren lives with his wife Sarah and two children, Alma Thomas and Libby-RaNae. Loren currently works for Hope, but eventually he will decide what he wants to do when he grows up.

Blefgen, Linda (Juneau) – Linda works on the UAS Juneau campus in the I.T. department and enjoys spending time outdoors with her digital camera capturing inspirational moments. Her photo “Dragon Fly” was published in *Tidal Echoes* 2008.

Bornstein, Tom (Juneau) – Tom has been an intermittent student at UAS for many years. In a turn of events that surprises even him, he recently became an Art Major in the degree program at UAS. He hopes to graduate within the next decade. Among the Art courses he has taken are Silk Screen, Northwest Coast Carving, Photography, and most recently Digital Art. This is the first time he has submitted any artwork for publication.

Branch, Dan (Juneau) – Dan has lived in Alaska since 1976 and Juneau since 1995 and has taken writing classes at UAS. For over twenty years he’s had a column in the *Alaska Bar Rag*, the official newspaper of the Alaska Bar Association. Some of his poetry and short stories appeared in UAS’s *Explorations*. Two of the poems won first place prize from the journal.

Burkinshaw, Kelli (Juneau)

Brooks, Clare (Juneau) – Clare recently retired after thirty years as an employee of state government, where she wrote procedure manuals, supervised lead project teams and analyzed technical data. Now, she is unleashed, exploring the world anew and writing about the experience.

Campbell, Tucker (Auke Bay) – Tucker is from Anchorage, AK and is enrolled in the English degree program at UAS with an emphasis in Literature and the Environment. He loves to ride his bicycle.

Chordas, Nina (Juneau) – Nina Chordas grew up in a Russian-speaking family in Monterey, California. Russian is her first language. She is currently Assistant Professor of English at UAS.

Christiansen, Jack (Juneau) – Jack has lived with his family in Juneau since 2005, where he is a “non-traditional” student at UAS and a full-time employee with NOAA.

Dearing, Tricia (Juneau) – Tricia has travelled the world and likes Juneau, Alaska the best.

Dauenhauer, Richard (Juneau) – Richard Dauenhauer was born in 1942 and has lived in Alaska since 1969. Since coming to Alaska, much of his professional work has focused on applied folklore and linguistics in the study, materials development, and teacher training of and for Alaska Native languages and oral literature. He is married to Nora Marks Dauenhauer.

Eckhout, Laurie (Juneau) – Laurie grew up in Juneau. She tries to write poetry (and sometimes even enjoys it!). She enjoys gardening, painting, and reading. And after 49 years of complete ignorance of the subject, she is learning to read music and play piano.

Elsensohn, Bonnie (Sitka) – Bonnie recently retired from working as the media specialist for Sitka Campus. She paints a variety of subjects in acrylics, often using her own photos as reference material. Her paintings have been shown in a gallery walk but have not been published.

Eriksen, Christy NaMee (Juneau) – Christy is a Korean adoptee poet born in the year of the ox to a shopgirl in Korea. She was raised by a loving family on the shores of Alaska. She has performed in Minneapolis at Patrick's Cabaret, Intermedia Arts, and Equilibrium's spoken word series at The Loft Literary Center. She has opened for Ishle Park, Mayda del Valle and the Good Asian Drivers Tour. She is a featured artist on the recently released "Nation of Immigrants?" spoken word compilation CD produced by The Loft Literary Center. Christy lives in Juneau. She loves plants, crafts, and bibimbap.

Fagen, Robert (Juneau) – Bob's poetry has appeared in *Tidal Echoes*, in *Blue Unicorn*, and in other magazines. His *Crab Creek Review* translation of Rilke's "Der Berg" received a Pushcart Prize nomination. Author of a novel, *The Pawless Papers*, from Orchises Press, and a scientific work, *Animal Play Behavior* (Oxford), he is a retired UAF professor and part-time UAS student.

Franklin, Beatrice (Juneau) – Beatrice has been on the Egan Library Staff for 12 years. She has been taking painting classes at UAS for the last 3 years. She has had work in the UAS juried student shows the last couple of years and did a show with two other painters at the Juneau Arts & Cultural Center last year. She prefers painting somewhat abstract landscapes.

Gire, Michael (Juneau) – Michael is a long-time resident of the Interior, and now calls Juneau home. He wrote most of his prose and poetry while going through the lowest period of his life, and truly believes it was as instrumental as anything in his recovery. He is blessed to have a loving wife and family and to live in the most beautiful place on Earth.

Hadley, Alison (Juneau) – Alison is a student who has been at UAS for about three years now and has always enjoyed writing, but lacked confidence in the kind of writing she produced. This piece, a personal essay, was her final essay in Emily Wall's ENG 311 class. She had done alright on her other essays throughout the semester, but this one was the first piece (in this semester and probably in her entire academic career) that she was told needed little to no editing. She is proud of it because she did what Emily told her to do and just let herself go. So, her true voice is more than clear, something she has been striving to achieve for a long time.

Hayes, Ernestine (Juneau) – Ernestine Hayes is an assistant professor at UAS and is the author of *Blonde Indian: An Alaska Native Memoir*, winner of the 2007 American Book Award. She is a grandmother of four and currently resides in Juneau.

Mary Henriksen (Ward Cove)

Holloway, Robyn (Juneau) – Robyn has lived in Juneau for seven years with her husband and three children. She graduated from UAS in 2003 with her BLA in literature and a minor in creative writing. She also co-edited the inaugural issue of *Tidal Echoes* in 2003. Currently, she works for the National Marine Fisheries Service Office for Law Enforcement.

Ingallinera, Kathy (Sitka) – Kathy has lived in Sitka for twelve years and works as a family nurse practitioner at SEARCH. She enjoys creative writing and has taken a variety of writing classes at UAS-Sitka. In her spare time (between caring for her 3 dogs and other activities such as volunteering at the Raptor Center) she writes short stories based on her twelve years as an ICU nurse and her work with rescuing dogs. She also writes on Sundays with a group of like-minded Sitka women called Women, Ink.

Jensen, Aleria (Juneau) – Aleria lives in Juneau and works as a federal biologist coordinating

marine mammal conservation and management programs. Her poems and essays have appeared in *Orion*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Potomac Review*, *Tidal Echoes*, *Camas: The Nature of the West*, and the Juneau Poetry OmniBus Project. She spends her free time paddling, hiking and otherwise exploring the landscapes/seascapes of Southeast Alaska.

Jones, Ryan (Juneau) – Ryan is a student at the University of Alaska Southeast. He has taken several creative writing workshop courses, but has yet to be published. His stories are all highly thematic and are inspired by observations of the human condition as well as philosophy and music. In the attached story, "Blood and Guts," the theme is "powerlessness."

Korpela, Rob (Juneau) – Rob loves to write, paint, draw, and create art! Art for him is an exploration. He also writes poetry and loves the play of words. He aims to capture life relaying as much energy as possible and a wave of expression. What is better than that which picks up the human heart and that which speaks of life? When he paints his goal is to create abstracts using sharp lines and a variety of colors.

Kvansnikoff, Forest (Auke Bay) – Forest is a senior at UAS graduating with a BSS emphasis in history this coming Spring semester of 2009. Eventually, he hopes to wind up in a classroom teaching history to high school students who all adore history. He feels writing is great fun but it tastes nothing like cheese, which – he guesses – is okay.

Lambert, Kaleigh (Juneau) – Kaleigh is originally from New England, she moved to Alaska from Maine. She spent her freshman year in Fairbanks, but her love of the ocean brought her to Juneau. She is currently an English major. This is her second year at UAS, and she is planning on completing her college career here.

Landis, Rod (Ketchikan) – Rod Landis is an Associate Professor of English at UAS, and lives in Ketchikan with his wife and daughter. "Fade" has appeared before in *Ice-Floe*.

Lane, Ashia (Sitka) – Ashia is a writing enthusiast. She dabbles in poetry from time to time while working on her M.F.A in creative non-fiction. Inspired by life experiences and people in general, she finds material all around her, especially in the naturally beautiful setting of Sitka.

Lounsbury, Andrew (Douglas) – Andrew grew up in San Jose and came to UAS to study marine biology in 2005. After two semesters of biology he decided he didn't like biology anymore, and he switched his major to English in 2006. He is currently in his fourth year and hopes to graduate by Fall 2009.

Mandl-Abramson, Jette (Juneau) – Jette is a full time UAS art student focusing on ceramics and 3-D art. She pulls most of her material from experiences that she has had and tries to relate them to the physical world in a positive way.

McMillan, Marie Ryan (Juneau) – Marie is a parent and teacher in Juneau. She has lived and taught in many rural Alaska communities. She is a graduate of UAS.

Munro, Alan (Juneau) – Alan is Originally from Old Westbury, N.Y. He lived in Vermont, TN. and has now lived in Alaska for the past 37 years. He has worked in museums in Vermont, New York City, Tennessee and Alaska. He has shown work regularly from the late 1950s to present and has shows scheduled for 2009 and 2010.

Pasley, George (Ketchikan) – George is pastor at Ketchikan Presbyterian Church. His poems have appeared in a number of periodicals, in an anthology published by the Presbyterian Writers' Guild, and in a self-published collection. Prior to becoming an ordained clergy, Pasley was a shepherd and sheep-shearer in Maryland and New York.

Phillips, Victoria (Auke Bay) – Victoria is a senior at UAS majoring in Elementary Education. She is originally from Noatak, Alaska, a small rural village in northwest Alaska, but came to

Juneau to further her education. She hopes to return home to teach.

Pyfer, Stevie-Kaye (Juneau) – Stevie is a senior at UAS, working towards a BLA in Communications and Language Arts with an emphasis in Creative Writing and a minor in Art. She grew up in Kenai, Alaska and has spent all four years of her college life at UAS, where she was introduced to the idea of writing as a career, rather than biology, as she had originally intended. She enjoys reading and writing and hopes that others enjoy what she has to share.

Prescott, Vivian Faith (Sitka) – Vivian was born and raised in Wrangell, Alaska. Vivian is a Sáami/Suomalainen poet and writer living in Sitka with her husband, two dogs and a cat. She has four children, two step-children and many grandchildren. Along with her daughter, Vivian Mork Yéilk', she is co-director of Raven's Blanket, a non-profit designed to enhance and perpetuate the cultural wellness and traditions of Indigenous peoples through education, media, and the arts.

Randall, SueAnne (Juneau) – SueAnne reaches across imaginary boundary lines and works in a variety of art mediums. Her whimsical and engaging pieces emerge from her imagination with the mission of saving the world, one smile at a time. Mother-of-many and grandmother of five SueAnn has lived in Juneau, Alaska since 1973. As a current member of the Juneau Arts and Humanities Council Board of Trustees, SueAnn would like to remind you that your patronage and support of the Arts helps make the world a better place.

Ribich, Eli R. (Petersburg)

Sheperd, Barbara E. (Juneau) – Barbara has lived in Juneau for 18 years and in Alaska for 26 years and has been writing poetry on and off for at least that long.

Soboleff, Ruby (Juneau) – Ruby is a freshman at UAS pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Education has always been very important to her. She received two awards during High School for academic achievement: one during her sophomore year from her Spanish teacher, and one during her senior year from her Art teacher.

Stokes, Richard (Juneau) – Richard, a 37-year resident of Juneau, has published both prose and poetry. His poems appeared in 2003, 2006 and 2008 in *Golden Poetry: A Celebration of Southern Poets*, in *Ice Floes* in 2006 and in *Tidal Echoes* in 2007 and 2008. He had poems selected for Juneau's Poetry Omnibus in 2006, 2007 and 2008. His wife, Jane, is a Juneau artist.

Strong, Daniel (Juneau) – Daniel grew up hiking and kayaking in Southeast Alaska, and this experience has developed in him an unnatural affinity for inclement and disagreeable weather. He graduated in 2007 from UAS with a degree in marine biology, the perfect achievement for a future career as a writer. He's currently a prospective and hopeful future physician. At least he's working on it.

Terzis, Jane (Juneau) – Jane is an Associate Professor of Art at UAS. She teaches painting, drawing and three courses in Art History. She is a practicing artist and her work is in the permanent collections of The University of Alaska Southeast, The Museum of the North (UAF), The Alaska State Museum, the Anchorage Museum of Art, and the Alaska State Council on the Arts Contemporary Art Bank. Her work has been published in *Ice Breakers: Alaska's Most Innovative Artists*.

Underkoffler, Keith (Juneau) – Keith is a Liberal Studies major from Bloomington-Normal, Illinois. He enjoys playing hockey and Ultimate Frisbee. His literary influences include T.S. Eliot, Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon, and Alan Moore.

Voelckers, Matt (Douglas) – Matt was born and raised in Juneau and now attends UAS. He's declared himself an art major and a creative writing minor.

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